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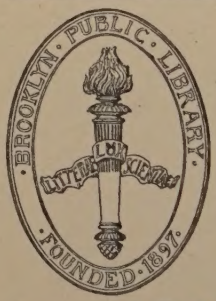

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SCOTLAND'S BATTLES FOR SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE

SCOTLAND'S BATTLES FOR SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE

BY

HECTOR MACPHERSON

AUTHOR OF

"HERBERT SPENCER: THE MAN AND HIS WORK";

"BOOKS, AND HOW TO READ THEM";

ETC., ETC.

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HIS DEBTORS.

PREFACE

In his Chalmers Lectures, Sir Henry Moncreiff remarked that the one thing needful to create a new interest in the great principles contended for at the Disruption, was an attack on the doctrine of Spiritual Independence. Within recent months the truth of the remark has received dramatic illustration. As a consequence of the House of Lords' decision in the Church case, the old battle once more rages.

Intelligent understanding of the issues involved demands, on the part of the student, intimate acquaintance with previous controversies, which, so far as Scotland is concerned, have their roots in the fundamental conflict of the Reformation period. In this volume — the contents of which originally appeared in a series of articles in the *Edinburgh Evening News* — I have endeavoured to trace the various stages in

the battle for Spiritual Independence from the time of John Knox to the present day.

For permission to republish the articles in their present form, I have to thank the Directors of the *Edinburgh Evening News, Limited.*

H. M.

Edinburgh, *March* 1905.

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PRELIMINARY

SCOTLAND'S BATTLES FOR SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

One marked effect of the Church case which for a considerable time has exercised such dramatic sway over the public mind, is the widespread interest which it has created in Scottish history. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to touch ecclesiastical or theological questions without raising issues whose roots lie deep in the history of Scotland. Of late years attempts have been made to explain the evolution of Scotland by general causes—geographical, economic, and political—but these have failed, just because they leave out of account the fundamental factors, Scotland's battles for religious truth and spiritual independence. The national life of Scotland dates

from the Reformation. That great event marks the overthrow of Rome and the victory of Protestantism, with all its liberating influences. It is taken for granted that the Reformation had to do almost exclusively with religion. Some modern writers in dealing with the subject would fain make their readers believe that what the Reformation did for Scotland was simply to substitute one form of superstition for another, not in all cases for the better. We are told how from excess of Puritanic zeal the Reformers made war against cathedrals, repressed the instinct for beauty, trampled upon the amenities of life; in a word, introduced the unlovely *régime* of despotic fanaticism. Rome, it is said, may have chastised Scotland with whips, but the Reformers chastised it with scorpions. Thus we find Buckle and his modern disciples dwelling with emphasis upon the evil done to Scottish life and character by the theocratic rule of the saints, though, to his credit be it said, Buckle did full justice to the political side of the Reformation and to the influence of the Church in the great work of liberation.

There is only one way of escape from a one-

sided estimate of the Scottish Reformers and their successors, the Covenanters, namely, by viewing Protestantism in its entirety as a life-system in comparison with Romanism. It is impossible to understand Romanism aright if we view it simply as a form of religion. It was something more; it was a vast system which sought to bring within its sweep not merely the spiritual but the secular interests of mankind. It aspired not only to open the gates of heaven, but also to govern the earth. In its palmy days during the Middle Ages, Romanism included within its sphere of influence the intellectual as well as the spiritual side of life, the political as well as the ecclesiastical. The stern foe of new ideas, Romanism frowned upon intellectual movements which made for mental independence. The stern foe of nationalities, Romanism sought to preserve its world-wide sway by ruling kings and princes with a spiritual rod of iron in the form of excommunication. But in both spheres, the intellectual and the political, the spirit of the age was against it. Intellectual movements in the form of Humanism silently sapped the doctrine of intellectual infallibility,

and the movement in favour of nationalities, which sprang out of the chaos of the Middle Ages, sapped the theocratic pretensions and power of the Papacy. Foiled in its endeavours to reign unchecked over rising nationalities, Romanism did the next best thing for its own interest—it sought to rule through monarchs who were devoted to the Church. Romanism, in brief, was a colossal system whose object was the despotic rule of man and society in all spheres, sacred and secular. On the spiritual side, the Church stood as the mediator between heaven and earth. Only through its channels could divine grace flow to man; only those ideas which received the stamp of orthodoxy were allowed to enter the mind of man; and only those rights which received the sanction of the Church were conceded to man and society. The duty of man and society was implicit submission to the Church; the duty of the Church was to exercise absolute power over man and society.

The first break in this huge system of despotism was made by the Humanist movement, which dates from the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, when, owing

to the dispersion of the Greeks, the literature of the ancient classical world was scattered among the nations of Europe. Plato dethroned Aristotle, the pillar of Roman Catholic philosophy, and the science and literature of the ancients were substituted for the theological disquisitions of the Churchmen. In Scotland the Humanist movement was represented by George Buchanan and Sir David Lindsay, who sowed the intellectual seeds of the Reformation. As against the intellectual despotism of Rome, the Humanist movement represented the right of the individual to search for truth by his own free efforts, instead of taking it ready-made at the hands of an infallible Church. The Humanist movement represented the intellectual side of the Reformation, and emphasised the intellectual rights of humanity. By itself, Humanism would have had little influence on the great mass of humanity. Compared with the religious, the intellectual instinct is weak. The Reformation proper began when men claimed the right to approach God direct without the intervention of an ecclesiastical organisation. Just as Humanism declared the relation of man to

truth to be an individual affair, so the Reformation declared the relation of man to his Maker to be an individual affair: Humanism stood for Intellectual Independence: the Reformation for Spiritual Independence. But the reaction against Rome could not stop at the assertion of intellectual and spiritual independence; it was bound to extend to the political sphere. Complaints began to be made against the temporal aggression of Rome, and this note we detect in the utterances of Luther and Wycliffe. The national spirit fostered by the rise of industrialism, consequent on the break-up of feudalism, still further fostered the yearning for liberty; and thus Rome was confronted with a new rival in the form of Protestantism, which at every point—religious, intellectual, and political—laid down principles of thought and action absolutely antagonistic to Rome.

The root principle in the threefold warfare with Rome was Spiritual Independence. The religious instinct is the strongest in man, and in those countries where it was most successful in securing freedom of exercise the greatest was the progress towards political liberty.

England, for instance, did not secure Spiritual Independence at the Reformation. She substituted the despotism of the Monarch for the despotism of the Pope, and in the form of Episcopacy elaborated a theory of Divine Right, which proved a formidable obstacle to England's political development. In Scotland it was different. Beginning as an aristocratic movement, the Reformation in the hands of Knox soon became thoroughly democratic. In battling for Spiritual Independence, Knox at the same time was fighting for the political liberties of the people. In his eloquent way, Buckle paid a striking tribute to the democratic element in the Scottish Reformation: "The clergy, by their sermons, by their conduct, both public and private, by the proceedings of their Assemblies, by their bold and frequent attacks upon persons without regard to their rank, nay, even by the very insolence with which they treated their superiors, stirred up the minds of men, woke them from their lethargy, formed them to habits of discussion, and excited that inquisitive and democratic spirit, which is the only effectual guarantee the people can ever possess against the

tyranny of those who are set over them. This was the work of the Scottish clergy; and all hail to them who did it. It was they who taught their countrymen to scrutinise, with a fearless eye, the policy of their rulers. It was they who pointed the finger of scorn at kings and nobles, and laid bare the hollowness of their pretensions. They ridiculed their claims, and jeered at their mysteries. They tore the veil, and exposed the tricks of the scene which lay behind. The great ones of the earth they covered with contempt, and those who were above them they cast down. Herein they did a deed which should compensate for all their offences, even were their offences ten times as great."

THE REFORMATION AND ITS RESULTS

CHAPTER II

THE REFORMATION AND ITS RESULTS

It is well to remember that Protestantism had great difficulties to encounter in carrying its fundamental principles to their logical issue. In Germany Protestantism took the form of Lutheranism, which retained something of the spirit and tendencies of Romanism; while in England the work of the Reformers was arrested long before the breach with Papal ideas and practices was complete. In Scotland, from a variety of circumstances, the Protestant movement developed along the lines of Calvinism, which logically confronted Romanism at all points. The keystone of Romanism, as already indicated, was its theory of the relation of man to God. Once admit that between man and God no direct relation was possible, and that all communication had

to be carried on through a select and separate priestly caste, in whose hands was absolute spiritual power, it followed logically that man as man had no rights, only duties. And thus politically as well as theologically Romanism claimed the control of man and society. But a new principle was springing up—the principle of nationality, which came into collision with Romanism in the purely secular sphere, due largely to economic causes arising out of the break-up of feudalism. In the process of nation-making, Scotland lagged behind other countries.

When the Reformation began the Scottish nation existed only in name. It was kept as a preserve of the Roman Catholic Church, and though the country felt the impulse of the nationalist movement, there were no popular forces to carry the movement to a successful issue. Scotland was torn between two contending parties. Its natural desire for independence was constantly thwarted by the designs upon her of two great rivals, England and France. Scotland's main desire was to preserve her national identity, and in harmony with the spirit of the time this was sought by

the usual dynastic method of matrimonial alliances. By means of these alliances, both England and France were constantly scheming to draw Scotland into the net of their designs. Kings and nobles alike aided and thwarted the schemes of England and France, according as they seemed to be favourable to Scotland's interests. The first effect of the work of Knox was the substitution of religious for dynastic factors as the controlling element in the making of Scotland. Up till the Reformation the duty of Scotsmen, as of all other peoples, was submission to an infallible Church which regulated man's approach to God. Knox, in Scotland, changed all this when he refused to acknowledge the claim of Rome, and declared that man as man had not only a religious duty to approach God, but also the religious right to approach Him apart from any ecclesiastical channel. In the eyes of Knox the one and only Mediator between God and man was not the Church, but the Redeemer, whose will was to be found not in ecclesiastical traditions but in the Bible. Such a conception had immediate and striking effect on the diplomatic policy of Scotland.

When Queen Mary came upon the scene the nobles were still bent upon their old dynastic method of preserving the Scottish balance of power. The nobles cared little for religion. They were intent, from patriotic motives, on playing England and France against each other. Hence we find the nobles at one time favouring Protestant England, and at another time Catholic France. Hence it happened that when Mary claimed the right of succession to the English crown she had the support of many of the Scottish nobles who had previously favoured England. The motives of the nobles being patriotic rather than religious, they were naturally disposed to deal as tenderly as possible with Mary's religious susceptibilities when she arrived in Scotland. Manifestly, if Mary's claims to the English crown were to receive support, it would be very unwise to do anything that would irritate the Catholics of England and of the Continent. Mary Stuart began the game very astutely. She asked permission to have Mass performed at Holyrood—on the surface a very modest request. But it was the turning-point in Scottish history. Some of the nobles who had

cast in their lot with Protestantism were disposed to grant the Queen's request. Even Moray was so enamoured of the English succession that he was in favour of Mass being performed at Holyrood. Knox would have nothing to do with what, in his view, was a wicked concession to Romish idolatry. So incensed was Moray with Knox that he refused to converse with him for a year and a half. The moment for Scotland was critical. Allow Mass, and the foundation was laid for a coalition between France and Scotland against England in favour of the succession of Mary to the throne of Elizabeth. Patriotism in the hands of Scottish nobles meant the aggrandisement of Scotland at the expense of England without regard to religion. What Knox foresaw happened—toleration of the Mass at Holyrood soon passed from the Queen to her Catholic subjects, and a set-back was given to Protestantism. The Mass, Knox declared, he dreaded more than ten thousand armed men.

By his fierce opposition to Queen Mary's Romanist practices at Holyrood, Knox introduced a new element into Scottish diplomacy.

He substituted religious for patriotic interests. Knox, in brief, made it plain that man's relation to God held the first place in life; nothing of an earthly nature, national or international, should be allowed to usurp the claims of religion. The all-important question came to this: Now that the claim of Rome had been denied, what nation-making force should take its place? Many of the nobility thought that Scotland's interests lay in supporting Queen Mary's claim to the Crown of England. Scotland's aggrandisement at the expense of England was the one supreme ambition of the nobles. Not so, said Knox. Scotland's ambition, now that the yoke of Rome was broken, should be to declare its allegiance to God instead of to either Church or State. Knox had opposed the Papacy when it declared its right to rule Scotland, and he was just as ready to oppose Scottish patriotism when it involved the toleration of the Queen's Roman Catholicism. It might lead to the aggrandisement of Scotland, but Knox saw that it would also lead to the strengthening of the Romish Church with all its iniquities and despotisms. Higher than political con-

siderations, higher than political claims, was the one supreme claim of man as man to be allowed to worship God in his own way—in short, to have Spiritual Independence. The first stage in Scotland's battles for Spiritual Independence was reached when Knox raised his voice in loud and heroic tones against Queen Mary and the Mass in Holyrood. Once the Mass was tolerated the old Papal claim was allowed, and there was no room left for Spiritual Independence.

But Knox could not carry out the great work without help. Not much help could be expected from the feudal lords, although in justice it must be said that many of them lent their powerful aid to the Reformation. Whence was the help to come? Knox appealed to the common people. He created a new element in Scottish life, the democratic element. By what instrument was the democratic element created? By the Bible. It is a common charge against the Reformation that it simply substituted one infallible authority for another, the infallibility of a Book for the infallibility of a Church. What difference, it may be asked, is there between

being ruled by an infallible Pope and an infallible Book? The difference is great. The one, by leaving no room for anything but abject acceptance of the Papal decrees, nips at the root all individuality; faith, not reason, holds the field. The other, by making a book the standard, sends the individual in critical mood to the standard, and at every stage he brings the decrees of the Church and the teaching and lives of her rulers to the test of Scripture.

Once the right of private judgment is admitted in religion, it must extend to other spheres of activity. When Knox demanded religious liberty, and in prosecution of his crusade against Rome went up and down the country seeking to interest the common people in his cause, little did he dream that he was calling into existence a new power, before which kings and aristocrats would one day bow. Froude sums up the situation accurately as follows :—"The Protestantism of Scotland was the creation of the commons, as in turn the commons may be said to have been created by Protestantism. There were many young high-spirited men, belonging to the noblest

families in the country, who were amongst the earliest to rally round the Reforming preachers, but authority, both in Church and State, set the other way. The congregations who gathered in the fields around Wishart and John Knox were, for the most part, farmers, labourers, artisans, tradesmen, or the smaller gentry; and thus for the first time in Scotland there was created an organisation of men detached from the lords and from the Church —brave, noble, resolute, daring people, bound together by a sacred cause, unrecognised by the leaders whom they had followed hitherto with undoubting allegiance. That spirit which grew in time to be the ruling power of Scotland—that which formed eventually its laws and its creed, and determined its after fortunes as a nation—had its first germ in these half-formed, wandering congregations. In this it was that the Reformation in Scotland differed from the Reformation in any other part of Europe. Elsewhere it found a middle class existing—created already by trade or by other causes. It raised and elevated them, but it did not materially affect their political condition. In Scotland, the commons, as an

organised body, were simply created by religion. They might love their country; they might be proud of anything which would add lustre to its crown; but if it was to bring back the Pope and Popery they would have nothing to do with it; nor would they allow it to be done. Allegiance was well enough, but there was a higher allegiance suddenly discovered which superseded all earthly considerations." To sum up: Till the Reformation Scotland had been dominated by two Romanist principles—the Sovereignty of the Church and Spiritual Submission. Knox confronted these with two principles drawn from Calvinistic Protestantism—the Divine Sovereignty and Spiritual Independence. By carrying these two principles to triumphant victory, John Knox laid the foundation of Scotland's greatness.

In one of his highly suggestive books, the late Sir John Seeley has the following:—"Religion is, and always has been, the basis of societies and states. Look almost where you will in the wide field of history, you find religion, whenever it works freely and mightily, either giving birth to and sustaining states, or

else raising them up to a second life after their destruction." In recent years attempts have been made to formulate philosophies of civilisation, especially from the materialist standpoint. Thus we have civilisation traced back to physical, climatic, and economic causes, and religion, when recognised, is usually treated as an obstructive force. The ideal period, in the opinion of certain writers, is one in which the race will have left behind all kinds of religion—which with them is synonymous with superstition—and press onward to a purely secular millennium. France made one attempt in this direction at the time of the Revolution, and her experience should be a warning to the whole tribe of iconoclasts. If there is one thing to which history bears most emphatic testimony, it is to the fact that man is a worshipping animal. He will form conceptions of the Power upon which all things rest and of his relation to that Power. Nay, more; the conception which man forms of his relation to the Infinite will determine his conception of his relations to his fellows—in a word, will determine his social and political creed. The history of Romanism

shows plainly the truth of this. Once admit that God cannot be approached except through an organised priesthood, and the logical result politically is a paternal conception of society, in which men are treated as children who have duties but no rights. Acceptance of the dogma of the Sovereignty of the Romish Church, or its Anglican counterpart, the Divine Right of the Sovereign, inevitably leads to the spiritual and political submission of the people.

The Scottish Reformation was noteworthy for the fact that it met with firm denial and fervent opposition the theory of Romanism that man can only approach God through an organised priesthood, an ecclesiastical caste. Man as man, the Reformers held, had direct relation to God, to whom he was in the long-run responsible, and whose will it was not only his duty but his right to study for himself. In matters spiritual, said Knox, man had a right to claim independence. It was mainly by secular weapons that Rome could enforce its despotic claims, and thus by natural stages, spiritual led to civil and political despotism. How could the Reformers effectively oppose

the claims of Rome? They could only assert spiritual independence in one way—by claiming political liberty. So long as the people of Scotland were content with the Romanist doctrine of submission, no political problems could arise; but once man was declared to be responsible in the long-run to God, a problem of great magnitude at once sprang into existence, which may be stated thus: What is the duty of the people to a Sovereign who endeavoured to rule them on Romanist principles and to compel them to conform to Romanist practices? Knox was ready with an answer. The people, in his view, were called upon to resist an erring and despotic King as well as an erring and despotic Pope. The political creed of the Reformers is clearly and unhesitatingly shown in the various conversations of Knox with Queen Mary and her Ministers. The opinions of the great Reformer have been well summarised by his biographer, M'Crie. Knox contended that rulers, supreme as well as subordinate, were invested with authority for the public good: that obedience was not due to them in anything contrary to the divine law, natural or revealed; and that in

every free and well-constituted Government the law of the land was superior to the will of the Prince. Inferior magistrates, he held, might restrain the supreme magistrate from particular illegal acts without throwing off their allegiance or being guilty of rebellion; no class of men had an original interest and indefensible right to rule over a people independent of their will and consent.

Knox did not shrink from the logical consequences of his reforming principles. If, he said, the rulers became habitual tyrants and notorious aggressors, the people were absolved from oppressors, and had a right to depose them and elect others in their stead. Notice how the political and spiritual factors in the Reformation hang together. If man's right and duty consists in approaching God direct, apart from an organised priesthood, then it becomes his duty to preserve his spiritual rights at all costs. In the time of Knox the spiritual rights of Scotland could be preserved only in one way—by strenuous opposition to the Crown and the nobles, whose feudalistic sentiments naturally led them to look askance at Knox's new and revolutionary theory of

political individualism. Knox appealed to the common people, and we have direct evidence that in the efforts to secure for them spiritual independence he laid the foundation of political liberty.

At the close of the Civil War during the time of the Queen-Regent, an assembling of Parliament took place, and its composition is worthy of special notice. In the reign of James VI. the lesser barons had been exempted from personal attendance in Parliament, and permitted to elect representatives in their respective shires. By neglecting their privileges, the lesser barons had practically forfeited their rights. At this time, however, they assembled in Edinburgh, and petitioned Parliament for restoration of their ancient rights. The petition was granted, and about one hundred barons took part in the proceedings. The appeal to religious freedom created Scottish democracy; it meant the deathblow to the divine right of kings and the divine might of aristocracy. But for Knox and his untiring labours among the common people, the Reformation would simply have meant the substitution of one despotism for another—the

despotism of the feudal aristocracy for that of the Roman Catholic clergy.

The nobles had helped to overthrow the ancient Church, but their ideal was not spiritual but feudal independence. The real work of reform was carried on by the help of the people. In pulpits and presbyteries the clergy encouraged a democratic and insubordinate tone, which eventually produced the happiest results by keeping alive at a critical moment the spirit of liberty. Even writers who on the religious and intellectual side belittle the Reformation are constrained to admit its influence in the purely political sphere. Thus the author of *Politics and Religion in Scotland*, 1550-1695, while treating the subject from the standpoint of Moderatism, bears testimony to the political value of the Reformation. He quotes as evidence of the rise of the democratic spirit the remark of Killegrew to Lord Burghley in 1572: "I see the noblemen's great credit decay in that country, and the barons' boroughs and such-like take more upon them." In these days we are in danger of forgetting our political indebtedness to the Reformers. In the words

of Buckle: "At a most hazardous moment the clergy kept alive the spirit of national liberty. What the nobles and the Crown had put in peril, that did the clergy save. They were the guardians of Scottish freedom."

Knox, as the great heroic figure of the Reformation, did something more than plant the germs of democracy in Scotland; in fighting the battle at home he was also determining the future of Great Britain. In the words of Dr Hume Brown: "Had Mary on her return to Scotland found her people united in their allegiance to Rome and their predilection for France, the course of British history must have been different from what it actually became. With three-fourths of her subjects Catholic, Elizabeth could not have held her own against a sovereign in Mary's position, backed by the dominant opinion of Europe." From this point of view England to-day, as well as Scotland, owes to the great Reformer the political liberties she enjoys. And what was the inspiration of the great liberation movement? There can be but one answer—the battle for Spiritual Independence. In so far as the contest with Rome was concerned, Knox

carried Scotland to triumphant victory. But the situation created by the Reformation created a new phase of the great controversy. Knox had overthrown the power of Romanism, but the Reformed Church had scarcely got upon its feet when it found a new opponent to its demand for Spiritual Independence in the shape of the Civil Power.

THE OPENING CONFLICT BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

CHAPTER III

THE OPENING CONFLICT BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

By overthrowing the Church of Rome, Knox, from a purely religious point of view, secured the triumph of Protestantism. But politically Protestantism's triumph could not be complete till it was embedded in the Constitution. In those days no such thing was possible as complete separation of Church and State. In fact, such separation was hopelessly impracticable. Religion, in consequence of the action of the Roman Catholic Church, had become not merely a matter of the soul's everlasting welfare, but also a huge system of temporal government—a comprehensive life system in which man's social and political duties were carefully defined. From the nature of the case, Protestantism had to confront its great rival

with an equally comprehensive life system, and to utilise in the great conflict all the powers of the State. It was therefore quite natural, when in 1560 the Reformation triumphed, that Knox should seek to fortify it with the powers of the State. Naturally, also, there arose the complex question as to the relations which should exist between the two great authorities — the Church and the State. Romanism solved it by making the Church supreme; Erastianism solved it by making the State supreme. Protestantism in Scotland sought the solution in a scheme whereby the two authorities were reckoned to be supreme in their respective spheres—the Church independent in matters spiritual, and the State independent in matters secular. Such a theory carried with it elements of friction—elements which were not slow in revealing themselves.

The opening act in the drama was the first meeting of the General Assembly in 1560, in the Magdalen Chapel, Edinburgh, after the overthrow of the Romish Church. Six ministers and thirty-four elders assembled, and constituted themselves the Supreme Court of the Reformed Church of Scotland. Their first

work was to prepare the Book of Discipline, setting forth the Presbyterian form of Church Government. The book received the approval of the General Assembly, but not of Parliament, owing to the opposition of an influential minority. It is highly important to note that the Church did not consider the consent of Parliament absolutely necessary. The Church adopted the Book of Discipline, and the Confession of Faith drawn up by Knox and four of his friends, as the basis of the Church. Those two documents laid it down in clear and unmistakable language that the only head of the Protestant Church was Christ. In order, as Knox says, to strengthen existing obedience, the Church thought it desirable to obtain for their ecclesiastical system the consent of the Crown. Sir James Sandilands was sent to France to lay before Queen Mary the Act, and to receive the royal assent. Mary refused her assent. This did not alter the determination of Knox and his friends to treat as valid the foundation Acts of the new Church. Knox expressly says that "they little regarded with regret the Queen's refusal." The request, he said, had been made "rather to show our

dutiful obedience than to obtain any strength to our religion, which from God hath full power, and needed not the suffrage of men." The Reformer, as a matter of political expediency, would have preferred to have the Queen's consent to the declaration of the General Assembly, but as the fundamental principle of the new Church was the Headship of Christ, the refusal of the Queen to establish the new religion was not considered of vital spiritual importance.

Protestantism received at the hands of the people national recognition, although it was not at the hands of the Crown formally established. In the exercise of its Spiritual Independence the Church proceeded with its work, and paid no attention to the refusal of the Crown. Four months after Queen Mary arrived in Scotland the first real collision between Church and State took place. In December 1561, the General Assembly was held, when formal objection was made by Maitland of Lethington, on the plea that as the Queen had not given her consent the Assembly should not be held. Maitland had been one of the first to fall under Mary's influence. He was the Secretary of

State, and coming from him the protest had great significance. Knox, as usual, rose to the occasion. He told Maitland that if the meeting of the Assembly depended on the Queen's will they would soon lack not only the Assembly but also the public preaching of the Gospel. "Take from us," he said, "the freedom of Assemblies, and you take from us the evangel." Here, indeed, was a crisis. If the Queen's party prevailed—if Assemblies could not meet without the royal consent—then farewell to the fundamental principle of Scottish Protestantism, the Headship of Christ, with which was bound up Spiritual Independence. The Assembly claimed the right to meet. It refused to listen to Maitland, and proceeded with its business. In 1562 and 1564 the Assembly met, neither asking nor seemingly caring for the Queen's sanction, and conducted its own ecclesiastical and spiritual affairs, leaving to the State the control of matters purely civil.

Another feature of the question cropped up in 1563—namely, the independence of the pulpit. Knox, in a sermon, had spoken with his usual frankness on the subject of Mary's

marriage with a Roman Catholic. Mary was furious, and in an interview with Knox exclaimed, "What have you to do with my marriage, and what are you in this Commonwealth?" "A subject born within the same, madam," he replied, "and God hath in me, however abject I seem in your eyes, a profitable member within the same. Nay, madam, it pertaineth to me to forewarn such things as may harm it." Mary wanted to have Knox prosecuted, but it was not advisable to take such a step. Knox justified his claim for pulpit independence in these words: "In the pulpit I am not master of myself. I must obey Him who commandeth me to speak plainly." For a time the contest between the Protestant leaders and Mary and her sympathisers was acute, and it seemed as if Romanism was to be triumphant. The murder of Rizzio came upon the people like a bolt from the blue. The tragic event was the beginning of Mary's downward career. The Romanising schemes of her party were shattered, and a brighter day seemed to dawn for the Church, when in July, 1567, Mary abdicated in favour of her infant son. At the meeting of Parliament the Acts

of 1560, to which Mary had refused her consent, were ratified, and Protestantism was formally established as the religion of Scotland. The Confession of Faith was again ratified, and the Constitution was so framed as to bind the Sovereign to the Protestant religion.

What light does all this throw on the vital question of Spiritual Independence? Did the Parliament of 1567 in establishing the Church make it subordinate to the State? If we answer in the affirmative, then we are bound to the conclusion of the State in 1843 that the Church has no rights except those conferred upon her by the State. We are not bound to any such conclusion. National religion was not created by the State in 1567. National religion existed from 1560, and expressed itself through the various General Assemblies of the Church, which went its own way in obedience to its Divine Head, and as we saw in the case of Knox, frequently in disobedience to its earthly head. The Parliament of 1567, therefore, did not create the national religion; it simply agreed to recognise national religion, to give what had already existed by spiritual right legal standing. The situation as it stood

in 1567 is well summed up by Dr Thomas Brown in *Church and State in Scotland* as follows:—"Parliament did not claim to confer jurisdiction on the Church. It merely acknowledged in legal form the jurisdiction already belonging to her. For seven years the Church in her inherent right exercised her jurisdiction in her own affairs. Parliament came forward and declared that there shall be no other than this, which it found already in force. When the Assembly met after Parliament rose, the Act which had been passed in their favour did not make the least difference in their proceedings. No doubt they felt that the law was now on their side, but they were quite unaffected by the change. The Church was the same, the jurisdiction was the same, and they went on doing as they had done for seven years, neither more nor less. All along she had gone forward under the frown of the Sovereign and the Court in the fearless conscientiousness that she had a divine right on her side. The Church had parted with none of her inherent Spiritual Independence." If the Church of Scotland owed its existence to the State, then we must conclude that it did not exist till 1567. That,

of course, is nonsense, as the Church dates from 1560. If the Establishment principle is the fundamental basis of the Church, then we must conclude that for seven years, from 1560 to 1567, the Church had no fundamental basis—which is also nonsense.

The verdict of history is that the fundamental principle of the Reformation Church was Spiritual Independence, and that at its establishment national religion as based upon Spiritual Independence was only legally acknowledged, not legally created. The conclusion to be drawn from the history of the early conflicts between Church and State during the reign of Mary is that the Church held as a vital and essential principle Spiritual Independence, and was willing to accept State aid in the form of Establishment so long as it did not encroach upon her independence. In other words, Spiritual Independence was a vital and fundamental principle; Establishment was an expedient. This view has been frankly admitted by Dr Flint, perhaps the most learned ecclesiastic and theologian in the Church of Scotland. In a lecture on the "Church Question in Scotland," delivered in

Newington Parish Church in 1891, Dr Flint, speaking of the possibility of Presbyterian reunion, and the place which the fact of an Establishment might occupy in the discussion, said : "There is no principle of Establishment. It is very common, indeed, to speak of such a principle, but those who have done so have either inaccurately used the designation as synonymous with 'principle of national religion,' or have even in thought confounded Establishment with national religion, and fact with principle. Strictly and properly speaking, there is, I repeat, no principle of Establishment." Elaborating his argument, Dr Flint proceeds as follows : "Establishment is not a principle, but simply a fact. It can only be maintained to be an application of the principle of national religion. Applications, however, may vary with times and places, and must conform to circumstances. Establishment of a Church as national may be plainly reasonable and right at one time, and in a given set of circumstances, and at another time in another set of circumstances manifestly absurd and unjust." Dr Flint has penetrated to the root-thought of Scottish ecclesiastical history.

Conflict between Church and State

With the abdication of Mary, the crowning of her infant son, and the Establishment of the Reformed Church, the outlook for Protestantism was bright indeed. The victory, however, was not so complete as it looked. Mary, in her imprisonment, carried with her the sympathies of the Roman Catholic element in the country, and many of the nobles, though professedly Protestant, did not, for various reasons, approve of the turn which things had taken. Happily for the Protestant cause, the regency was in the hands of the Earl of Moray, a steadfast friend of Knox, and whose heart was really set upon the advancement of the Reformation. Just when things were at their brightest, when Mary had been defeated at Langside after her escape from Lochleven, Moray was assassinated at Linlithgow. Troubles thick and fast followed upon the tragic event. Taking courage from the confusion into which the Protestant party were thrown by the murder of Moray, the Queen's party raised the standard of civil war. Leading Protestant nobles, to their shame be it said, co-operated with the Roman Catholic party in the attempt

to put Mary on the throne, the effect of which would have meant the undoing of the Reformation. Much to the dismay of the Protestant party, Kirkaldy of Grange, who was known as a good Protestant, and who had been appointed by Moray as Governor of Edinburgh Castle, betrayed his trust and went over to Mary. Knox, who had hoped to close his days with the thought of victory for the cause to which he had devoted his life, was cast into deep dejection. He was the target of the attacks of his enemies. He was accused of all kinds of mean and unpatriotic motives and deeds. That the spirit of the old hero was as dauntless as ever may be inferred from the following answer to his slanderers, delivered from the pulpit: "One thing, in the end, I may not pretermit, that is, to give him a lie in his throat that either dare, or will say, that ever I sought support against my native country. What I have been to my country, albeit this unthankful age will not know, yet the ages to come will be compelled to bear witness to the truth. And thus I cease, requiring of all men that has to oppose anything against me, that he will do it so plainly as I make myself and

all my doings manifest to the world; for to me it seems a thing most unreasonable that in my decrepit age I shall be compelled to fight against shadows and howlets that dare not abide the light."

Well might Knox grieve at the death of Moray. The nobles had never been friendly to Protestantism. They detested the Book of Discipline, because in it Knox and his friends formulated a scheme by which the revenues of the Roman Catholic Church were to be used in the cause of the new religion. Moray, to his honour be it said, while Regent, did his best to preserve the rights of the Church in this regard. With his death the nobles got the upper hand, and introduced a method of thwarting the Church—a method which proved to be the cloven hoof of Episcopacy. Moray was succeeded in the regency by the Earl of Mar. The leading spirit of the King's party, however, was the Earl of Morton, who was as unscrupulous as he was greedy. Long he had his eye on the rich benefices, many of which were still filled by the Roman Catholics, who at the Reformation had been permitted to retain them for life. At their death the

revenues should have reverted to the Reformed Church, but this Morton and his friends were determined to prevent. In the face of public opinion they had not the audacity to secularise the revenues by the simple process of wholesale appropriation. An ingenious scheme was adopted. It was arranged to present the livings to certain ministers who, under private agreement, would make over the principal part of the revenues to such noblemen as had received the patronage of them from the Court. Morton had not long to wait for the execution of his plan. The Archbishopric of St Andrews having become vacant, Morton, who had secured the right of presentation, appointed a Mr Douglas, who in return handed over to Morton the greater part of the money. These men were called "Tulchan bishops," in allusion to the custom in the Highlands of placing a calf's skin stuffed with straw, called a Tulchan, before cows, to induce them to give their milk. It does not need much reflection to see that this method of providing ministers for the Reformed Church was quite alien to the Presbyterian system with its doctrine of Spiritual Independence. With-

out forfeiting its right which it held from its Divine Head—that of appointing ministers to preach the evangel—the Church could not look silently upon the invidious system of patronage.

Over this innovation a new phase of the battle for Spiritual Independence raged. Knox was not slow in raising his voice against this encroachment upon the Headship of Christ. Being unable to attend the General Assembly held at Stirling in 1571, he addressed a letter of warning, in which the following occurs: "I exhort you, yea, in the fear of God, I charge and command you, that ye take heed unto yourselves and to the flock over which God hath placed you pastors. Unfaithful and traitorous to the flock shall ye be before the Lord Jesus Christ if, with your consent directly, ye suffer unworthy men to be thrust into the ministry of the Church, under whatever pretence it shall be. Remember and judge before whom we must make our account, and resist that tyranny as ye would avoid hell fire." Morton had the effrontery to ask Knox to instal Douglas in his charge. Knox not only refused, but thundered forth against both Morton and his Tulchan bishops.

The Church refused to yield to Morton, who, finding that intimidation was useless, adopted a new method. He expressed a desire to have the matter in dispute settled amicably, and for that purpose a Convention was held at Leith in 1572. Knox was nearing his end, and his great successor, Andrew Melville, had not yet arrived upon the scene. This Convention, composed of men of no backbone, hastily assumed to itself the powers of a General Assembly. It was prevailed upon to delegate its powers to a small committee, who passed resolutions to the effect, among other things, that the titles of Bishops and Archbishops might be allowed to remain till the King came of age, on the understanding that they had no real Episcopal standing in the Church, and were under the control of the General Assembly. This mongrel scheme was received by the clergy and the people as a whole with the greatest discontent. The situation was critical. On the surface the quarrel between Morton and the Church had the appearance of a paltry ecclesiastical squabble, but in reality the question at issue involved the entire future of Presbyterianism.

Morton's motives were not altogether sordid. Like many of the nobles at the time of Queen Mary, Morton was much occupied with the patriotic side of the question. He saw the possibility of a union between Scotland and England under the rule of King James, and in his view the union would be more satisfactorily brought about if the two countries, already Protestant, were also one in Church government. Once more the Reformers were confronted with the old question, whether religion or political considerations were to hold the first place. Were the Reformers for purely political ideals to sacrifice the Spiritual Independence of the Church, to make it a branch of the Civil Service—were they, in other words, to substitute the headship of King James for the headship of Christ? This, and not a mere question of patronage, was the root principle at stake during the conflict between Church and State in the early years of the reign of James.

At this crisis there arrived upon the scene a great leader, who, snatching the banner of the Covenant from the feeble hands of the mediocrities, who had been cajoled by Morton,

once more carried it on to victory. Upon the shoulders of Andrew Melville descended the mantle of John Knox. Upon Melville Morton tried his policy of cajolery. He offered him a Court chaplaincy, and was anxious to make him Archbishop of St Andrews. Melville spurned all bribery, and was impervious to flattery. Morton next tried threats and intimidation. Calling him into his presence, he flew into a passion, denouncing those ministers who were disturbing the peace of the realm by these schemes of Geneva discipline. Addressing Melville, Morton, in a rage, exclaimed: "There will never be quietness in this country till half a dozen of you are hanged or banished the country." "Tushe," replied Melville, "threaten your courtiers in that fashion! It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the Lord's: my fatherland is wherever well-doing is. I lived out of the country ten years, as well as in it. Yet, God be glorified, it will not lie in your power to hang nor exile His truth." Under Melville's leadership the Church gradually departed from the fatal compromise of the Leith Convention. It became imperative

not only to repudiate the compromise, but also, in view of the Erastian policy of the Crown, to define, in the face of the new situation, the true relation of the Church to the State. Now, as at the time of the Reformation, it was necessary for the Church to make public her testimony to the principle of Spiritual Independence, to announce in unmistakable language her adhesion to the great doctrine of the Headship of Christ. Out of this feeling grew the Second Book of Discipline —approved by the General Assembly of 1578 —which may be described as the Magna Charta of Presbyterianism. The book was presented to Parliament, but was not ratified: but, ratified or not, it was adopted by the Church, in the exercise of its Spiritual Independence, as the mode of procedure by which the Church was to regulate her affairs in obedience to her Divine Head. In opposition to the Erastianism of the Crown party, with their insistence upon the Royal Supremacy, the Second Book of Discipline lays it down "that power ecclesiastical flows immediately from God and the Mediator, Christ Jesus, and is spiritual, not having a temporal head

on earth, but only Christ, the only Spiritual King and Governor of His Church." In addition, the hierarchical devices of Episcopacy were declared to be unscriptural, and declaration was made of the natural equality of the clergy.

Another stage was now reached in the battle for Spiritual Independence. Knox, as we saw, fought for the freedom of the Church to frame its own Constitution, and by means of General Assemblies to claim supremacy in matters spiritual. In this regard the mere establishment of the Church made no difference. With or without the State's Establishment, the Church claimed to be free to give its allegiance to its Divine Head. The next stage which we are now considering was the attempt of the Crown to encroach upon the rights of the Church in the matter of its ministers. Manifestly, if the Crown or the nobles had the power of presenting ministers to charges, a serious blow would be struck at the Spiritual Independence of the Church in so far as concerned the preaching of the Gospel. "Take from us," said Knox, "the liberty of Assembly and you take from us the evangel." "Take from us," Melville might

have said, "the liberty of electing our ministers and you also take from us the evangel." The Second Book of Discipline was the ultimatum of the Church to the Government: it was a note of defiance, an announcement that come what may the Church meant to stand by the Headship of Christ. The book was emphatically a declaration of war against Episcopacy, and conflict was inevitable.

THE STRUGGLE WITH EPISCOPACY

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE WITH EPISCOPACY

Readers of the prolonged struggle with Episcopacy are in danger of taking too narrow a view of the question at issue. At the first glance, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resemble a prolonged Donnybrook Fair, in which kings, nobles, and clergy are engaged in perpetual scrimmages over obscure and unimportant points of prestige, polity, and doctrine. The arrows of modern critical scorn are specially directed against the clergy, who persisted in turning the nation upside down with their fanatical attempts to translate into modern Scotland antiquated theocratic ideals.

Scotland, according to some modern critics, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was torn asunder by the attempts of three parties —the King, the nobles, and the clergy—to

gain the upper hand, and wield despotic sway in the interests of their respective orders. Critics of the courtier type, who love to be at ease in Zion, who prefer the stagnating comfort of despotism to the exciting, and sometimes turbulent, struggles of liberty, and who have reached that stage of philosophic impartiality where no opinions are considered worth fighting for — such critics are specially fond of denouncing the Scottish clergy for the part they played in the history of their country. Their cry for Spiritual Independence is looked upon as the outcome of a fanatical desire to keep the people in the old clutches of superstition. Written from this standpoint the history of the doings of our forefathers is a record of theological delusions, of ecclesiastical futilities. Those epochs, upon which some of us look back as redolent of the heroic, become changed in the hands of the drawing-room historian and literary dandy into a series of squalid episodes, illustrative of nothing but ferocity and fanaticism.

In opposition to this cynical and soul-killing theory, we contend that the battle which the Reformers fought for Spiritual Independence

was fraught with large issues, political as well as ecclesiastical. Take the struggle for the independence of the Church in the matter of the election of ministers; a struggle which, as we saw, ended by the production and adoption by the Church of the Second Book of Discipline in 1578. A small matter it looks, that of the Church claiming a right, as against the Crown, to elect its ministers; but small as it seems now, the question in dispute contained within itself the political future of Scotland as against Rome. Knox had settled once for all the question of the divine right of the Pope, but after his death, in the days of Andrew Melville, a new kind of divine right came—the divine right of kings. According to this theory, subjects, as such, had no rights. The right of the King was to rule, the duty of the subject was to obey. It is impossible to understand the prolonged battle which the Church waged under the banner of Spiritual Independence unless we keep prominently before the mind the fact that in essence it was a battle against a despotic theory of life which, if successful in the spiritual sphere, would have rendered impossible the rise of what we all cherish so

highly—the political liberties of Scotland, with their beneficent harvest.

What, then, was the precise theory of government against which the Church fought so strenuously? King James had formulated the theory of divine right in his book, published in 1589 under the title of *The True Law of Free Monarchy*. By a free monarchy James meant a monarchy which was free from all restraint or control. In essence the book is a defence of despotic power on the part of the monarch, and of passive obedience on the part of the people. Naturally James was anxious to translate his theory of divine right into practice, and the first sphere in which the attempt was made was the ecclesiastical sphere. In his view, Episcopacy was essential to absolute monarchy. His favourite motto was, "No Bishop, no King." Here two antagonistic theories of government came into violent collision. The Church held that subjects as well as kings had certain inalienable rights, among them being the right in things spiritual to obey their Divine King and Head.

In order to prevent misunderstanding, the

Second Book of Discipline was drawn up and adopted as a Magna Charta of the Scottish Church. Its provisions may be summed up in one word — Spiritual Independence. In the matter of Church government, this meant that the Church claimed the right to elect its own ministers, a claim which struck at the theory of James, that by divine right such matters lay with the Crown. The Second Book of Discipline was a challenge to James. He was not long in seeing that if the Church succeeded in securing the liberty it claimed in matters spiritual a great inroad would be made in his theory of arbitrary and uncontrolled monarchy. We of to-day are hampered in the spiritual sphere by Judge-made law. Our forefathers were hampered in the spiritual sphere by King-made law. In name they differ—in essence they are the same; they agree in demanding adherence to legal tradition just because it is legal tradition, and not because it is something higher than mere legality, namely, right and justice. We of to-day have to fight the battle in our own way. We may get inspiration from the study of the methods by which the Reformers battled for their rights.

James was not long in accepting the challenge of the Church. The struggle took place. The King when he came to the throne was encouraged in his despotic tendencies by two counsellors whose influence was inimical to the Reformed Church—a relative of his own, Esmé Steuart (afterwards made Duke of Lennox), who had been sent from Paris to restore French influence in Scotland, and Captain James Steuart, created Earl of Arran. An opportunity for their experiments in the divine right theory soon came. In June 1581, Archbishop Boyd, of Glasgow, died. Lennox, who had secured a grant of the living, nominated a weak creature, Montgomery, who had been minister of Stirling. The General Assembly in conformity with the Second Book of Discipline, by which such nomination was an infringement of the spiritual rights of the Church, prohibited Montgomery from accepting office. The case was remitted to the Synod, the members of which were called before the King to answer for their conduct. The Synod refused to acknowledge the Crown jurisdiction. In the end the Assembly excommunicated Montgomery. The King and

Council proclaimed the sentence null and void. A meeting of Assembly was held, when Melville denounced this new form of Popery. A remonstrance was drawn up, and Melville with others was appointed to present it to the King and Council. When they presented the protest, Arran exclaimed, "Who dare sign these treasonable articles?" "We dare," said Melville, and advancing to the table he took the pen from the clerk and subscribed, the other Commissioners following his example.

The attempt at monarchal interference in things spiritual was for the moment checked. Under a new form the conflict between the two powers, the civil and the spiritual, broke out. For a sermon preached about the time of the famous Ruthven raid, Melville was put on his trial. Melville refused to acknowledge the civil jurisdiction of the Privy Council, and claimed in the first instance to be tried by the Church Court. For this he was condemned to imprisonment at Blackness, but under the advice of his friends he fled to England.

It is an easy matter for arm-chair critics

to rail at men like Melville for using the pulpit as a political platform, and for shielding themselves against the consequences of what is termed seditious language under the theory of Spiritual Independence. In our time, when abundant means are at hand of influencing public opinion, there is no need for converting the pulpit into an engine of political controversy. In the days of Melville the work of political agitation had to be done by the clergy, if it was to be done at all. On the one hand was a despotic court party, and on the other the people without national leaders, the nobles being for the most part self-seekers. Unless the clergy voiced the sentiments and feelings of the people, nothing could save the nation from the iron heel of arbitrary power. M'Crie puts it well when he says: "The pulpit was the only organ by which public opinion was or could be expressed, and the ecclesiastical courts were the only assemblies in the nation which possessed anything that was entitled to the name of liberty or independence. Parliament had its business prepared to its hand, and laid before it in the shape of Acts which required

only its assent. Discussion and freedom of speech were unknown in its meetings. The Courts of Justice were dependent on the will of the Sovereign, and frequently had their proceedings regulated and their decisions dictated by letters and messages from the throne. It was the preachers who first taught the people to express an opinion on public affairs, and on the conduct of their rulers, and the Assemblies of the Church set the earliest example of a regular and firm opposition to the arbitrary and unconstitutional measures of the Court."

A modern writer, whose ecclesiastical sympathies are the opposite of M'Crie's, frankly admits on the political side the beneficial influence of the Church. In his book, *Politics and Religion in Scotland*, 1560-1695, Mr Mathieson, who sides with the Moderates, has the following: "The Scottish Parliament—a one-chambered House, at the mercy of the King and the nobles, and existing only to register the decrees of its own Lords of the Articles—could be but the most inadequate expression of the national life. On the other hand, the General Assembly, entirely popular in character, and pervaded by a

strongly Puritan spirit, fulfilled many of the functions of a Scottish House of Commons; and in the towns, where religion savoured most of politics, the want of newspapers was made good to some extent in the bi-weekly sermon." When, therefore, Melville claimed to have his case tried in the first instance by the General Assembly, he was in reality calling in the aid of the spirit of democracy in the battle with despotism. Thus does spiritual independence naturally ally itself with political liberty. Destroy the one and the very existence of the other is endangered.

With Melville and other leading ministers in banishment, James and his advisers grew bolder. In the Parliament of 1584, which met with closed doors, all previous legislation in favour of the Church was abrogated. It was declared to be treason to question the King's authority in spiritual matters. Without his permission no Church Court could meet. It was also treason to speak against Bishops or one of the Estates in Parliament. Presbyteries were abolished, and in their dioceses Bishops were to have full authority. These were well-named the Black Acts. This was indeed a

dark period for the Church. The nation was thrown into a state of turmoil. The Court party, notwithstanding that they wielded all the power of the State, made no headway against the passionate attachment of clergy and people to Presbyterianism. The only outcome of the Black Acts was to burn into the minds of the nation fierce hatred of Episcopacy. Previously the Church had opposed Episcopacy mainly on Scriptural grounds; now they had good practical reasons for resisting it to the death. Relief came from an unexpected quarter. The news of the invasion of the Armada bound together the Crown and the Church. In May 1585, Elizabeth persuaded James to agree to measures for their mutual defence. A great Christian league with England was entered into. In this way closer relations sprang up between the King and the Church. On his return from Denmark, with his bride, in 1589, James was in specially good humour with the clergy. The following year he attended a meeting of the General Assembly, and made a speech, in which he praised God that he belonged to such a Kirk, the sincerest Kirk in the world. The Church saw their

opportunity. While the King was in an effusive mood, and in a conciliatory frame of mind, the General Assembly got Parliament to pass the memorable Act of 1592, by which the Black Acts of 1584 were annulled, and the Second Book of Discipline ratified.

The bearing of all this on the view held by the Law Lords is obvious. If the Establishment principle was vital and fundamental, then we must conclude that during the eight years of the Black Acts, from 1584 to 1592, when Episcopacy was established, the Church of Scotland did not exist. So far from that, the Church during those eight years gave lively evidence of its existence. Taking its stand on Spiritual Independence, it claimed the right to exist, in spite of its disestablishment by James. Here we are on firm, historic ground. In 1578 the General Assembly approved of what is called the "Second Book of Discipline," in which extensive changes were made on the methods of Church government. Did the Church wait for the concurrence of the State? Not till 1592 did King and Parliament ratify the Second Book of Discipline. In the interval the Church carried out its ecclesiastical

reforms as if no Parliament was in existence. Taking its stand on the doctrine of Spiritual Independence, the Church refused to admit that the concurrence of the State was necessary. The Church did not despise the power and protection of the State, but these things were not believed to be essential to the existence, identity, and self-government of the Church. The Act of Parliament of 1592 did not create the Church. It simply protected the Church, gave it, so to speak, legal status. It held itself as much a Church under the Black Acts as under the Act of 1592, the only difference being that in the latter year it was established in such a position of security that it could exercise Spiritual Independence, without external hindrance.

The Act of 1592 ratifying the Second Book of Discipline, and giving legal status to the Church, marked an epoch in the great struggle for Spiritual Independence. The Act was the charter of Presbyterianism. It sustained the people in their long contest with arbitrary power. Upon it the Church founded its claim of right. At first it was fondly believed that all contests were over. Calderwood, the

historian of the period, triumphantly declared that "the Kirk of Scotland was now come to her perfection." The perfection did not long continue. The Act was supposed to restore to the Church its supremacy in all things spiritual. In the main, such was its purport and immediate issue, but its wording left much to be desired. In an insidious way the Act left room for the old bad system of patronage, and by granting the King the power, though under certain limitations, of calling the General Assembly, it opened a side road for the reintroduction of the royal supremacy.

The time was close at hand when James would clutch eagerly at the helps towards supremacy which the Acts afforded. It was a time when Romanism was ruthlessly pursuing its long-cherished design upon England and Scotland. In December 1592, a conspiracy to overthrow the Government, in which were implicated several Scottish Earls, was discovered, and naturally the Church expected the help of the King in bringing the conspirators to justice. James played a most unworthy part. He acted as if he regretted the detection of the conspiracy. For decency's

sake he had to pretend indignation at the conspiracy, while in reality he was indignant with the clergy for so persistently clamouring for punishment upon Roman Catholics. James had his eye upon the throne of England, as Elizabeth's life was now drawing to a close. In England the Roman Catholic party was still strong, and this party James did not wish to drive into hostility by extreme measures against their brethren in Scotland.

The Church leaders would brook no shuffling. Backed by the laity, the clergy resolved to drive the King into a decision. A deputation waited upon him at Falkland. James, who detested the idea of proceeding to extremities with the Popish conspirators, endeavoured to browbeat the deputation. Andrew Melville stepped forward, and, seizing the King by the sleeve, addressed him as "God's silly vassal." "Sir," said Melville, "I must tell you there are two Kings and two Kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James the head of the Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus the Head of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and in whose Kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a

head, but a member. We will yield you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say you are not head of the Church. Sir, when you were in your swaddling clothes Christ Jesus reigned freely in this land, in spite of all His enemies." Such a stern avowal of Spiritual Independence drove James into a mood of acquiescence, but in an interview with another deputation he expressed the opinion that there would never be peace in the land till the marches were "rid" between the civil and the spiritual powers. His ideas of the powers of the State were formulated by him thus: That the General Assembly should not refer to matters of State in their sermons; that the General Assembly should not be convened without his command and special authority; that nothing done in it should be held valid till ratified by him in the same manner as Acts of Parliament.

The King was not long in putting his theory of divine right into practice. He put David Black, minister of St Andrews, on his trial for a fierce attack in a sermon on the Crown and the aristocracy. The clergy rallied round Black, and one of them, the esteemed Bruce,

told James plainly that the matter would have been comparatively trifling if it only concerned an isolated individual, but the case involved a principle of great moment—the liberty of the Gospel and the sovereignty of Christ; and in defence of these they must hazard their lives. Black was found guilty, and sentenced to go into ward beyond the North water (the North Esk). At this time the Commissioners of Assembly who appeared in Edinburgh to watch the trial were ordered to quit the capital within twenty-four hours. Some of the clauses of the Black Acts were revived, which prohibited the clergy from criticising the Government. In the confusion and excitement a riot took place in Edinburgh, and to show his disapprobation the King removed the Court to Linlithgow. It was notified to Edinburgh that no General Assembly was to be held within its walls; the seat of the Presbytery was to be transferred to Musselburgh or Dalkeith; the manses of city ministers were to be forfeited to the Crown; and neither magistrates nor ministers were to be appointed without the royal approval. In a word, James in dramatic fashion proclaimed

to the nation that above all Churches and statutes was the divine right of the King to govern Scotland untrammelled. For the moment Royal Supremacy had trampled upon Spiritual Independence.

Having gone so far in humiliating the clergy, James now proceeded to overthrow the constitution of the Church. It is not necessary to follow in detail the King's crafty and insidious methods of establishing Episcopacy. His actions were all in harmony with the views expressed in one of his books, in which it is said that the ruling of the Kirk was no small part of the King's office; that equality among ministers was not in harmony with a monarchy; that Puritans were pests in the Kirk; and that Bishops must be set up.

In 1603, on the death of Elizabeth, James became King of England, and in his new position had greater freedom for the exercise of his despotic powers. Freed from the presence of the Scottish Church leaders, and backed by the power of England, James threw off all semblance of decency, and in headlong fashion set about the riveting of Episcopacy upon Scotland. Step by step he curtailed the

rights of the Presbyterian Church, and by the most discreditable means—bribery, persecution, and deceit—he thrust upon the people a system of Church government entirely at variance with the most elementary notions of religious liberty. How James ruled the Assembly through his creatures the Bishops, how he introduced all kinds of Episcopal innovations in worship, how he banished the ministers—are not all these things duly recorded in the histories of the period? In the midst of his high-handed despotism James died, leaving to his successors a terrible harvest of retributive misery, a veritable heritage of woe.

In the midst of all this, who were the custodians of Scotland's liberties? Just those persecuted Presbyterian clergy who in these days are held up to ridicule by philosophic historians and drawing-room critics. We hear much of the ignorance, the superstition, the uncouthness, the insolence of the clergy; and we are told that the success of their labours would have meant for Scotland a prolonged reign of an exclusive ecclesiastical corporation, which would have been more detrimental than the arbitrary rule of the Stuarts. We are

constantly told of the haughty airs of the clergy, who from the pulpits interfered in every part of public life, to the great decay of anything like loyalty.

It is a constant charge against the Reformers that under the plea of Spiritual Independence they sought to exercise tyrannical sway over all phases of secular life. True it is that the Church continually meddled with matters political. One reason is not far to seek. By political weapons the Church's Spiritual Independence was threatened, and by political weapons it had to be defended. As the late Duke of Argyll, in *Presbytery Examined*, has it: "There were no affairs of politics at that time which were not also pre-eminently affairs of religion. If the Assemblies and pulpits of Presbytery had been silent on the factions of the time, they would have been silent on the dearest interests of the Church. On their vigilance, activity, and resolution depended the religious and civil liberties of the people, exposed as they were to the combined danger of Romish intrigue, of senile Parliaments, and of an ambitious, deceitful King."

Just as in the case of Knox, whose battle

for Spiritual Independence in Scotland greatly furthered the cause of Protestantism in England, so in the case of Melville, the good fight which he fought greatly strengthened the hands of England in their great battle, which ended in the war upon the Stuart dynasty. How that came about, and how, through the Covenanters, Scotland had a large share in the Revolution Settlement, will become clear as we proceed. In the meantime, it is enough to remark that with the accession of James to the throne of England the question of Spiritual Independence ceased to be a matter of purely Scottish importance. It now passed out of the purely ecclesiastical arena, and got mixed up with the larger question of constitutional liberty. Those who treat the Reformers and Covenanters with contempt, and write of them as a band of fanatics, will be surprised to learn that, in the battle for Spiritual Independence, the persecuted remnant anticipated principles of constitutional liberty which in later days became the watchwords of British statesmen, and which formed the basis of an advanced school of political philosophy.

THE COVENANTING STRUGGLE

CHAPTER V

THE COVENANTING STRUGGLE

James, the despot, the victim of the Divine Right delusion, was succeeded on the throne by his son Charles, who had all his father's love of power with little of his craftiness. Trained in a stern school, James when possible avoided direct conflict with the Scottish people. He loved circuitous methods. In the act of making concessions he strove by ambiguous clauses in Parliamentary Acts to leave an opening for the exercise of the Royal Supremacy. At an early stage of his kingly career James was impressed with the political necessity of uniformity of religion in the two kingdoms. But experience had taught him that in endeavouring to realise this ideal the Crown would have to work warily. He warned Laud of the danger of undue attempts

at coercion, and told him that he knew not the stomach of the Scottish people.

In the hands of Charles the despotism of James, linked with bigotry, brought about a colossal conflagration. Charles had no sooner received the reins of power than he began his high-handed attempt to produce religious uniformity by riveting Episcopacy upon Scotland. At the outset of his crusade against Presbyterianism, Charles made a fatal blunder in diplomacy. In order to endow the Bishops, and to provide himself with funds, Charles resolved upon a hazardous policy, that of taking from the nobles Church lands which had come into their possession at the Reformation. Thus by one act he created two kinds of enemies, the nobles and the clergy; the one class resented interference with their feudal, and the other with their spiritual, independence. Charles was not long in giving full swing to his theory of Divine Right. By his own sole prerogative he introduced into Scotland, in 1637, a Book of Canons, by which not only was Presbyterianism overthrown, but the people were practically deprived of their civil liberties. This was followed by a Liturgy

inspired by Laud, and framed upon distinctively Roman lines. This proved the last straw. From all parts of the country trooped bands of people to Edinburgh, in order to raise a protest against what was looked upon as a national outrage.

The popular feeling received dramatic expression in the famous scene in St Giles Cathedral, when Jenny Geddes flung her three-legged stool at the Dean. The agitation, general all over the country, formed itself into a regular organisation in Edinburgh. Each class, nobles, gentry, clergy, and burgesses, consulted separately, meeting from time to time for joint conference. This body was called "The Tables." As one man the protesters resolved to defend the religious and civil liberties of Scotland. Their resolution took dramatic shape in Greyfriars Churchyard on the last day of February, 1638, when the noblemen, barons, gentlemen, ministers, and burgesses subscribed the National Covenant. The scene lives for ever in the history of Scotland. In *The Fifty Years' Struggle*, by James Dodds—a book of great ability and insight—the scene has been described as follows:

"How the dullest chronicler kindles into a reverential glow as he relates how the Commissioners who had charge of the momentous task assembled in the early dawn of that February morning. How the myriads from Tweed to Tay, from Merse to Galloway, flocked to the Greyfriars, filling church and churchyard. How one great historic face after another appeared on the scene. With what heavenly ardour Henderson prayed to the High and Lofty One, with whom a whole nation essayed to enter into Covenant—he was famed as the most eloquent man of his time. How earnestly and devotedly the people listened as Warriston read the Covenant. How, after the reading of the document, there was a solemn pause, as if men were bowed down by a feeling of the immediate presence of Divinity. How this dread expressive stillness was broken when the Earl of Sutherland, advancing deeply affected, affixed the first signature to the National Covenant. Then how a tempest of long pent-up enthusiasm ran through the assembled multitude. Name followed name, as with electric speed. Some wept aloud; some raised a shout of exultation as from the

field of battle and victory; some after their signature added the words 'till death'; some opened their veins and subscribed their names with their own blood."

Within two months the Covenant had the approval of the people all over the country, exclusive, of course, of the Court party, the Bishops, and officials, whose personal interests compelled them to do nothing against the established authority. What was the essence of the Covenant? It was a national declaration of Spiritual Independence. In organised form the people of Scotland plainly told King Charles that they were compelled by their conscience resolutely to withstand all attempts on his part to dictate to them in the matter of religion. The King's party in Scotland, alarmed at the state of public feeling, were in favour of withdrawing the objectionable Book of Canons and the Liturgy. Several members of the Privy Council were called to London, and while there they received from Scotland a paper containing a list of the grievances of the Covenanters. They demanded not only the withdrawal of the Book of Canons and the Liturgy, but also the abolition of the High

Commission. Strong complaints were also made of the other Erastian practices which had been introduced into Scotland.

Charles made a feeble effort to conciliate the Covenanters. The King's real attitude was shown in his blunt avowal: "I will rather die than yield to their impertinent and damnable demands." Emboldened by their success, the leaders of the Covenanters held a General Assembly—the first free Assembly for forty years—in Cathedral Church, Glasgow. Not without considerable protest from the King's party, the Assembly claimed the right to legislate for the Church quite independently of royal consent. After disposing of preliminary business, the Assembly annulled all Acts of the Assemblies since 1605—in short, swept by the board the Episcopal methods, principles, and practices which James and his son had thrust upon Scotland. The meeting before closing appointed the next General Assembly to be held in Edinburgh in July 1639.

This has been called the "Second Reformation." The Scottish people in 1638 under its new leader, Alexander Henderson, did what Knox did in 1560, and Melville in 1585—

emphatically declared that in matters spiritual they owed allegiance not to earthly monarchs but to their Divine Head. But the King was not to be overawed by a number of ministers meeting in General Assembly. He resolved to put down the Covenanters by force of arms. The Covenanters began to make military preparations. Under the leadership of General Alexander Leslie, the Scottish army was now ready for the field, and more than a match for the King's forces. Charles ordered his army to meet him at York in April 1639, but before he arrived there Scotland was practically in the hands of the Covenanters.

The King and the Covenanters came to an understanding, which, however, proved but temporary. Charles in moments of weakness might grant the demands of the Scots, but his heart was fixed upon despotic power. He could not brook the high-handed way in which the General Assembly trampled upon Episcopacy. Dissatisfied with the dilatory policy of Charles, the Covenanters went on with their military operations. Matters were brought to a crisis by the Covenanters sending what was practically an ultimatum, to the

effect that as they could not remain in arms for an indefinite period the questions in dispute must be brought to an immediate issue. They announced their intention of proceeding to England to get redress of their grievances from Parliament. Charles immediately took action. He marched from London to York with a force ill-led and ill-disciplined. Meanwhile the Scottish army under Leslie crossed the Tweed into English territory. They met and defeated the royal troops.

After a series of successes the Covenanters petitioned the King to listen to their grievances. It is quite unnecessary here to dwell in detail on the various aspects of this conflicting and complicated drama. Suffice to say that Charles, in great unpopularity in England, in consequence of his high-handed treatment of his Parliament, was not in a position to refuse the demands of the Covenanters. As the outcome of prolonged negotiations with the King, the Covenanters got what they had fought for. The Acts of Parliament of 1640 were ratified, the prerogatives of the Crown were diminished, and the Parliamentary Constitution itself was somewhat modified. The King left Edinburgh

for England on 18th November 1641, evidently pleased with his diplomacy. He was engaged in a bitter controversy with his English subjects, and he saw that success in England was only possible by pacification of the Covenanters.

So far as Scotland was concerned, the outcome was that in the efforts to secure Spiritual Independence the Covenanters helped to break down the Divine Right theory, and pave the way for the constitutional theory of government. By this time it became plain to the Covenanters that there were other things besides religious liberty at stake in the conflict with Charles; the cause of Protestantism itself was in danger. In the person of Laud political absolution was working steadily on behalf of Romanism. Had the Covenanters been influenced solely by national considerations they might well have ceased from troubling Charles after they had wrung from him concessions favourable to Presbyterianism. The Covenanters, like the Reformers, looked beyond national considerations. They not only wanted Scotland to enjoy Spiritual Independence, but also to become an effective factor in the great Protestant Revolution.

The Revolution, it should be remembered, was not effected once for all at the Reformation. Romanism, though defeated, was not destroyed. In the seventeenth century it made great efforts to recover the ground which it lost in the sixteenth century. Writing of this subject, Ranke, the historian, has the following: "In the early years of the seventeenth century Rome was of one mind, classical and monarchical. The Protestant world was romantic and republican. In the year 1617 everything betokened a decisive conflict between them. The Catholic party appears to have felt itself superior. At all events, it was the first to take up arms." "Rome," continues Ranke, "was determined to rest satisfied with nothing less than the restitution of all Church property, and the return of all Protestants to Catholicism."

Meanwhile England, under the influence of Laud, was playing into the hands of Romanism. By his innovations in doctrine and liturgy, Laud was the pioneer of the Tractarian movement of our own day, in so far as he attempted to make the dividing-line between Anglicanism and Romanism so thin as to be invisible.

Here we have the explanation of the fact that the Covenanters, not content with defeating the schemes of Charles in Scotland, lent their powerful aid to the Protestant cause in England. The Covenanters have been roundly abused for mixing themselves with English affairs, and for their intolerant attempts to extend beyond the Borders Covenanting principles. The excuse is found in the fact that the times in which they lived were not favourable to philosophic theories of toleration. Toleration by the Covenanters meant concession to Romanism, and concession to Romanism meant destruction to Protestantism.

The expectation of Charles, that concessions to the Covenanters would pacify Scotland and leave him free to deal with England, was not realised. Long before this time the question at issue had broadened beyond national boundaries. Scotland had once more secured Spiritual Independence; but, thanks to the designs of Laud, Protestantism itself was in danger. In England the situation was becoming critical. Arbitrary government had reached a climax, and in their difficulties the Parliamentary party appealed to the

Covenanters for help. The Covenanters were not slow in responding to the appeal. The two parties entered into a compact known as the Solemn League and Covenant, which was duly signed in 1643. The Covenanters were the more readily attracted to the alliance by the ideal held out to them by the English Presbyterians of uniformity of Church government in the two kingdoms.

Out of this grew the famous Assembly of Divines convened at Westminster. The Assembly, which included distinguished Scotsmen like Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, and Robert Baillie, sat for a number of years, and compiled the Westminster Confession of Faith. The adoption of this Confession by the Scottish Church in 1647 has a most suggestive bearing on the subject of Spiritual Independence. Observe that the step taken by the Church in substituting the Westminster Confession for the old Scottish Confession did not receive the sanction of the Crown for forty-three years after. If the decision of the Law Lords in the Church Case is correct—namely, that the Establishment principle is vital and funda-

mental—the conclusion follows that for forty-three years there was no National Church in Scotland! The Church did not consider itself effaced, did not believe its existence conditional on State recognition and sanction. In 1647, as in 1560 and 1578, the Church, acting on what it believed to be its spiritual prerogative, went on its way in formulating what it believed to be the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Its Head was not an earthly but a heavenly King. If the Church was acting within its rights in 1560, 1578, and 1647, in formulating its creed without the sanction of the State, manifestly it was only walking in the path of duty in claiming the same freedom in framing the Declaratory Act of 1892.

Moreover, if the creed cannot be modified without State sanction, then the legal Frees also stand convicted of breach of trust. That this is so is clear when we consider that one of the important things inculcated in the Covenant and Confession was the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy. Into the hands of the civil magistrate was put the sword for the purpose of punishing all heretics. In other words, the Westminster Confession

sanctions persecuting principles. The legal Frees, if they have left persecuting principles, have departed from one of the important sections of the Confession—the section which alone gives them the Establishment principle. A State religion which tolerates other religions is an absurdity. When our forefathers spoke of a State religion they meant a religion which all citizens had to adopt, inasmuch as the Confession of Faith was a part of the law of the land. A man who refused to belong to the Established religion was always treated as an enemy to the Commonwealth. This idea, which at the time of the Covenanters was very much alive, is now dead; and yet we have a handful of men, who are permitted to exist because persecuting principles are dead, making a successful claim to be the successors of the men who held them to be intensely alive. The legal Frees, in the matter of departing from the Confession of Faith, are equally guilty with the United Frees. If a creed is a document from which the Church cannot be released except by the consent of the State, clearly the legal Frees, if they have released themselves from the persecuting

principles of the Confession, are guilty of setting at defiance its Establishment principle; and have taken the first step in breach of trust.

The truth of the matter is, the religious and ecclesiastical history of Scotland is unintelligible unless on the assumption that the Church claimed and exercised the right to adapt its creed to its growing intelligence and needs. Observe, the Church of the seventeenth century was not so timid and conservative as the Church of to-day. It did not content itself with a Declaratory Act; it boldly framed a new Confession. Mr Taylor Innes, in his masterly *Law of Creeds*, puts this aspect well when he says: "The fact that the Scottish Church did in the period of its greatest energy and influence, and, indeed, at the culminating period of its history, throw away the old creed upon which it might plausibly be said to have been even founded, and of its own initiative exchange it for another and a wholly new one, casts a strong and not unneeded light upon the previous and subsequent history. And this is not less striking when we observe that the new creed is in no respect a modification or representa-

tion of the old. Not only is it the case that many propositions, and even whole paragraphs and chapters, contained in the Scottish Confession are not found in the Westminster Confession, and that very many are found in the new creed which were not in the old; but the two were not even made upon the same plan. The structure of the one is wholly different from that of the other. And they are equally different in details. There is no one sentence or proposition in the Westminster Confession identical with any one in the Scottish Confession. The new creed was made *de novo* without any thought of the old."

The formal adoption of persecuting principles by the Covenanters led them into a wrong road. Up till the Solemn League and Covenant they had been fighting largely for religious freedom; now they were determined to use their freedom to take away the freedom of other sects. They resisted all attempts of James and Charles to thrust Episcopacy upon Scotland, and now they were engaged in the attempt to thrust Presbyterianism upon England. Success in this objectionable form

of holy war was not to be wished for. It is easy to see how the Covenanters fell into the mistake of enforcing their particular form of religion and Church government as the absolute truth. Romanism and Prelacy were inimical to civil freedom as well as unscriptural. What more natural than to propose to put down by sheer force whatever did not commend itself to Scripture? The Covenanters had to learn the lesson of toleration, and they learned it from another band of religionists who sprang up in England out of the turmoil of the Civil Wars.

Just as Knox and his followers saw nothing infallible in Popes and Councils, so Cromwell saw nothing infallible in General Assemblies and Synods. In the name of Presbytery the Covenanters sought to impose upon England uniformity of religion; in name of Liberty of Conscience (Private Judgment), Cromwell pleaded for the Liberty of Dissent. Baillie, in one of his letters to Scotland, expressly describes one of the errors of the Independents as Liberty of Conscience. This was to turn Presbytery into a huge engine of oppression. In the name of religious

freedom, Presbytery had fought for Spiritual Independence; in the name of religious uniformity, it called in the aid of Spiritual Despotism. In the interests of freedom, the defeat of the Covenanting project in England was to be desired. Cromwell could no more stand the divine right of Presbytery than he could stand the divine right of Monarchy. In reply to the declaration of the Scottish clergy, Cromwell said: "Is it therefore infallibly agreeable to the Word of God all that you say? I beseech you in the bowels of Christ think it possible you may be mistaken." And what a lightning flash is another of his sayings: "Brethren, in things of the mind we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason."

Cromwell and his party have many sins of their own to answer for, but for one thing they deserve to be held in grateful remembrance —they opposed the despotism alike of the Covenanters and the Royalists with the doctrine of Private Judgment, which is really in essence Spiritual Independence. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise the necessity which was felt among Scottish and

English Protestants alike of presenting a united front to Romanism. Both countries had reason to view Prelacy as an enemy to civil freedom as well as a half-way house to Rome; and what more natural than the thought that Presbyterianism was the only possible system which could effectively put a check to the spiritual tyranny of Romanism and the political absolutism of Prelacy.

In his *Lectures on the Church of Scotland*, delivered in reply to Dean Stanley, Dr Rainy has admirably focussed the thoughts and feelings of the men who subscribed to the Solemn League and Covenant as follows: "To resist the influence of the Crown in Scotland, taken by itself, might prove in the long-run hard enough. But if England backed the Crown, if the Crown gained and held England in the name of supremacy and Prelacy, what would the result be? The Restoration, and the years that followed, showed what it might be. Now Scotland was still thrilling with the surprise of its awakening, its unity, its sudden resoluteness both about the basis and the end of action. Might not England's action and Scotland's be brought into the same line.

Might not England thrill with an impulse as thorough and masterful as Scotland's had been? The place given to the Solemn League and Covenant very much represented this dead-lift effort to get Prelacy and, as it was believed, Popery, dislodged from influence in the three kingdoms by a great heave. It was a 'most powerful mean,' so it was described, for 'purging and preserving' the Protestant religion. Therefore the State was to go through with it and pledge every man to the cause; and the Church could hardly be behind the State in a case of that kind. But the effect was that the nation turned out to have pledged itself to a work beyond its strength; for England proved not at all to be of the temper which covenanting implied. And since the requisite consent in England could not be maintained, the task was really as much beyond Scotland's rights as it was beyond her strength. Yet Scotland was sworn to persevere with the enterprise. Then even for Scotland itself difficulties were sure to arise—difficulties for the State, from imposing so peculiar a test of citizenship, and difficulties for the Church in carrying through the theory

that all her members were so pledged, and must carry out their pledge consistently. These difficulties appeared in a very edifying form when Charles II. came over from Breda, and appeared among the Scots as their own covenanted King. No man of wit, not even of the Scot, could resolve such a problem as that. Immediate entanglements followed, which got worse and worse, till Scotland was utterly paralysed and bewildered. . . . In so far as the Covenant seemed to pledge Church and State by oath to a definite Scottish or British Constitution, irrevocable and unalterable, it entangled men unwarrantably, and led to misunderstandings that never could be cleared up."

Scotland's humiliation at the hand of Cromwell, however painful at the time, was no evil. It was really a blessing in disguise. It was well for the Covenanters that their scheme of compulsory religious uniformity was upset. They had a great work yet to do, but the work could only be done in their own line and in their own land. The time came at the Restoration, when, driven back upon fundamental principles, the Covenanters once more proved themselves the salt of the earth.

OUR DEBT TO THE COVENANTERS

CHAPTER VI

OUR DEBT TO THE COVENANTERS

During the Cromwellian period the Covenanting party was in a state of distraction bordering on chaos. Out of the Solemn League and Covenant grew internal divisions, and under the antagonistic watchwords of Resolution and Protests, the party fell an easy prey to Cromwell, whose own rule at that time was better for Scotland than the turbulent sway of rival factions. The execution of Charles I. on 30th January 1649 was a turning-point in the fortunes of all parties. The gulf between the Covenanters and the Royalists was now so wide that it could not possibly be bridged. Cromwell, it was probably felt, had simply carried to their logical conclusion the revolutionary theories of the Covenanters. If it was legitimate to resist the King, why should he

not be put to death when his life became synonymous with civil and religious oppression? Still, in human affairs sentiment is usually a long way behind logic, and so it happened that among the Scottish people, who bitterly resented the rule of Charles, there sprang out of his execution a strong reaction in favour of Monarchy. Any sympathy there existed between the Covenanters and Cromwell in their mutual opposition was destroyed by the execution of Charles. The innate loyalty of the Scottish people showed itself in their invitation to the Prince who was crowned at Scone on 1st January 1651 as Charles II.

Their loyalty did not blind the Covenanters to the fact that Charles had no love of Presbyterianism, and accordingly, in order to bind him fast, they made him subscribe to the Covenants. The noticeable feature of the transaction is that the conditions imposed upon Charles were such as were totally incompatible with the divine right theory of Government, and contained the germs of Constitutionalism as expounded by the Whigs and modern Liberals. Before admitting Charles to the throne, an Act was passed declaring

that he "should consent and agree that all civil matters should be determined by the Parliament of the Kingdom, and all ecclesiastical matters by the General Assembly of the Kirk."

The Coronation sermon preached by Robert Douglas contained the following remarkable utterances: "It is good for our King to learn to be wise in time, and know that he receiveth this day a power to govern, but a power limited by contract, and these conditions he is bound to stand to. There must be no tyranny on the throne." That these were no isolated expressions of opinion dictated by the special circumstances of the case is plain from the fact that several years before, in 1644, Samuel Rutherford published his famous book *Lex Rex*, in which the political views of the Covenanters are reduced to something like philosophical system. Take the following extracts: "The power of creating a man a King is from the people. If the King have not the consent of the people he is a usurper, for we know no external lawful call that Kings have now, or their family, to the Crown, but only the call of the people. The law is not the

King's own, but given to him in trust. Power is not an immediate inheritance from heaven, but a birthright of the people borrowed from them. They may let it out for their good, and resume it when a man be drunk with it. A limited and mixed monarchy, such as is in Scotland and England, seems to me the best government, when Parliaments with the King have the good of all the three. This government hath glory, order, unity, from a Monarch; from the government of the most and wisest it hath safety of counsel, stability, strength; from the influence of the commons it hath liberty, privileges, promptitude of obedience." It is customary to talk of John Locke as the father of English political philosophy. He is claimed to be the originator of those political principles upon which the Revolution Settlement rests. Locke has a great deal to say in his essay, written in 1690, on Civil Government, or the rights of peoples and the limitations to monarchal Power. But the essence of it all is found in Rutherford's book, written fifty years before. How far the poor, despised, Covenanting preachers were ahead in political thought of English thinkers is seen in compar-

ing the speculations of Rutherford with those of Hobbes, the philosophical exponent of the divine right. Hobbes lays it down bluntly that "to the laws which the Sovereign maketh the Sovereign is not subject."

The noteworthy fact is that the political theories of Episcopacy and Presbyterianism were the direct outcome of the religious theories which underlay both systems. Assume with Episcopacy that the King is Head of the Church, and in the civil sphere there is no escape from the doctrine of passive obedience. The King, it was held, was accountable only to God. The clergy of the time of Charles declared in quite a boastful vein that the English was the only Church in Christendom which in principle disowned all resistance to the civil power. On this soil fell the doctrine of Hobbes—a doctrine which gave to the despotism of Charles I. something like philosophic approval. On the other hand, assume with Presbyterianism that Christ is the Head of the Church, and at once all kinds of despotisms are rendered impossible. Obedience to the Divine Head becomes the duty of the Presbyterian—even to the extent of dis-

obedience to the earthly King, when he oversteps his province. And thus, out of the religious tenets of a band of despised preachers have come the germs of a system of political philosophy which has proved to be the salt of civilisation. Macaulay wrote his *History of England* to vindicate the Revolution Settlement and to glorify the constitutional principles which destroyed the absolutism of the Stuarts. What was Macaulay unconsciously doing but glorifying the Covenanters, whose blood became in England, as well as in Scotland, the seed of constitutional liberty ?

Charles II. did not, like some of his modern admirers, underrate the intelligence of the Covenanters. He detected the revolutionary nature of their political philosophy. He was scarcely seated on the throne when he caused it to be decreed that all copies of Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex* should be burned at the Mercat Cross, Edinburgh, and at the gates of the New College in St Andrews. Thus in the person of Charles II. the antagonistic systems of political philosophy came into direct conflict. One or other must go under. If Charles was faithful to the Covenant, which his Scottish

subjects had compelled him to sign, clearly Hobbism in politics was impossible. If Hobbism was to triumph it was necessary to trample upon Presbyterianism with its doctrine of a limited monarchy. The burning of Rutherford's books was a dramatic intimation to Scotland that the divine right theory of government was to be asserted, and, as usual, the attack was made from the religious side. Charles was not long in showing his hand. The struggle once more raged round Spiritual Independence. Charles was inspired by the hereditary desire to make the Church dependent, to assert his own headship.

On the 1st of January 1661 the Scottish Parliament met, with the Earl of Middleton as Commissioner—a man who from being a Covenanter had become a creature of Charles. The Parliament—known as the Drunken Parliament—at once began in bold style the task of destroying the Church of the Covenant. It laid down as a doctrine the absolute power of the King over all persons and causes, asserted in plain terms the twofold supremacy. All men in public offices were called upon to abjure the Covenant as seditious. All

ministers inducted into charges after 1649, the date of the Parliamentary abolition of patronage, should require a new presentation from the patron and institution from a Bishop. The Solemn League and Covenant was burned by order of the English Parliament, the National Covenant was torn by herald at the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh. Men like Argyll and Guthrie were put to death. A reign of terror had begun. Up and down the country the emissaries of Charles went, breaking all laws, human and divine, as if under the special inspiration of the Prince of Evil. How was this pilgrimage of diabolism to be met? Clearly the natural social leaders of the people, the nobles, were in duty bound to oppose to the death the attempt of Charles to destroy every semblance of freedom in Scotland. At this supreme crisis Scotland got no help from the nobles; the work was done by the people, led and inspired by the Covenanters.

In his excellent book on *Richard Cameron*, in the "Famous Scot" series, Professor Herkless has some pertinent observations on this point. He says: "For 28 years through the times of Charles and of James, the strife between

freedom and tyranny was to last; a strife represented on the one side by men of the people like Richard Cameron, and on the other by King's men with their title of nobility. A struggle with hardly a leader of social fame in the one faction does not kindle the imagination of those who love a garish show in strife and splendour in their heroes. The absence of almost all the nobles from ranks swelled by peasants and officered by preachers seems to mark the later Covenanting movement, not as a struggle for national freedom, but as the hysteria of rude religious fanatics. Yet the cause was one in character with the earlier revolution of the National Covenant, which attracted Scotland's greatest nobles, and with them Montrose himself. Then, however, the privileges of the nobles were touched, for Charles I. had interfered with their hold over the teinds, had threatened to take from them the lands of the ancient Church, had sought to abolish their heritable jurisdictions, and was placing clerics in the offices of State. At the Restoration these same nobles, or their representatives, were poor, and instead of privileges to guard had only favours to seek.

These favours the King in England could alone bestow. They accepted, therefore, a tyranny which touched not themselves so much as the people who treasured religious freedom; and they refused to lose the Royal smiles and rewards for the sake of the independence of the Church. Sycophants these nobles were, almost to a man. Some fawned and became tyrants under an autocrat; others sinned by not resisting. Few men of rank were Covenanters."

In order to have a clear understanding of the blood-stained events of the Restoration period in Scotland, it is well to bear in mind that the struggle between Charles II. and Presbyterianism was really a struggle on the religious side between Spiritual Despotism and Spiritual Independence, and on the political side between Absolutism and Constitutionalism. It was one thing to formulate philosophic theories of government on paper; it was quite another thing to stand forth heroically in their defence. It is to the everlasting credit of the Covenanters that they sealed their principles with their blood. Rutherford not only formulated the true principles of government, but he also

strenuously opposed the despotic government of Charles. The opposition of the Covenanters was inspired by religious motives. Civil freedom they contended for as a means to an end, the end being liberty to worship God according to their conscience.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that all the Presbyterians were imbued with the spirit of men like Samuel Rutherford. Those known as Moderate Presbyterians, while refusing to acknowledge the King's rule in religion, were not disposed to abandon their civil allegiance. One party—the Cameronians—carried their views to their logical conclusion; they refused to acknowledge the right of Charles II. to rule Scotland secularly as well as spiritually on despotic principles. They disowned the Government. On the 22nd June 1680, twelve months after the battle of Bothwell Brig, twenty men on horseback rode slowly up the main street of Sanquhar, with swords drawn and pistols in their hands. When they reached the market-place two of them dismounted and walked to the Cross, the others forming a circle around them. These two were Richard Cameron and his brother

Michael. After singing a psalm and offering a prayer, a paper was read and afterwards affixed to the Cross. The paper was the famous Sanquhar Declaration. It contained the following ominous and momentous sentences: "Although we be for government and governors such as the Word of God and our Covenant allows, yet we for ourselves and all that will adhere to us, as the representative of the true Presbyterian Kirk and Covenanted nation of Scotland, considering the great hazard of lying under such a sin any longer, do by this present disown Charles Stuart, that has been reigning—or rather tyrannising, as we may say—on the throne of Britain these years bygone, as having any right, title to, or interest in the Crown of Scotland. We declare that several years since he should have been denuded of being King, ruler, or magistrate, or of having any power to act or to be obeyed as such. As also we being under the standard of our Lord Jesus Christ, Captain of Salvation, do declare war with such a tyrant and usurper and all the men of his practice, as enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ and His cause and Covenants, and against all

such as have strengthened him, sided with or anywise acknowledged him in his tyranny, civil or ecclesiastic."

From Scott downwards there has always been a band of supercilious critics, whose finer sensibilities have been shocked by the bold and threatening language of the Cameronian section of the Covenanters. Scott has been disposed of by M'Crie, and no more need be said on that head but this: the great novelist's travesty of a heroic episode in the history of his country will be remembered to his everlasting discredit. As to his feeble imitators, they may be allowed to pass into oblivion. Sensible people will find in the terrible circumstances of the time ample explanation of the fierce language of the Cameronians.

What these circumstances were may be gathered from the vivid and soul-stirring pages of Buckle: "The people, deserted by everyone except their clergy, were ruthlessly plundered, murdered, and hunted like wild beasts from place to place. The people, being determined not to submit to the dictation of the Government respecting their religious

worship, met together in private houses, and when that was declared illegal, they fled from their homes to the fields. In 1678, by the express command of Government, the Highlanders were brought down from their mountains, and during three months were encouraged to slay, plunder, and burn at their pleasure the inhabitants of the most populous and industrious parts of Scotland. . . . They deprived the people of their property ; they even stripped them of their clothes, and sent them out naked to die in the fields. . . . The nobles looked on in silence, and, so far from resisting, had not even the courage to remonstrate. The Parliament were equally servile." In the face of such barbarities can we wonder at the sternness of the Covenanters, and if their sternness sometimes took on a fanatical tinge, who among us in similar circumstances would have been free from intolerance and severity? Richard Cameron, in pursuance of his heroic resolution, fell a victim to his convictions. He lived before his time. The principles of the Sanquhar Declaration of 1680 became the principles of the Revolution Settlement of 1688. Verily, the blood of Richard Cameron, the

Lion of the Covenant, became the seed even of the State.

The years between 1680 and 1688, were years of blood. They are known in Scottish history as "the killing time." The Covenanters were hunted like wild beasts, bloodhounds being employed to track them to their retreats in the mountains. Another leader appeared on the scene to take up the work of Cameron. Renwick, the last of the Covenanters to suffer martyrdom, spent his brief life in sowing the seeds of religious and civil liberty. After the style of Rutherford, Renwick, in plain terms, enunciated those principles of religious and civil freedom which brought him to the scaffold. What need is there to detail the horrors of that awful period? Every Scotsman is familiar with the doings of Claverhouse. Every true Scotsman has had his heart set on fire by the reading of the barbarities inflicted upon men, women, and children by the devilish malignity of Charles and his gang of cut-throats. As has been vividly said: "Murder stalked red-shod in every valley and by every homestead in the West and South of Scotland." In the midst of his

campaign of butchery Charles II. died. He was succeeded by his brother James VII.

The Erastianism of Charles soon developed into the Popery of James. He began by giving liberty to Roman Catholics, but this, he saw, could only be effected by also granting liberty to Presbyterians. In 1687 there came an Indulgence, of which most of the Presbyterian ministers availed themselves. The Cameronians refused the Indulgence, and Renwick perished on the scaffold in February 1688. Renwick—the brave, candid, judicious, learned, gentle Renwick—surprised his judges, who expected to find a fierce, coarse agitator. One of them has left on record his estimate of Renwick: "He was the stiffest maintainer of his principles that ever came before us. Others we used always to cause to waver one time or other; but him we could never move. Where we left him, there we found him. We could never make him yield or vary in the least. He was of old Knox's principles." He was charged with denying the King's authority. He admitted the charge. "I own all authority," he said, "which has its prescriptions and limitations

from the Word of God; but cannot own this usurper as lawful King, seeing both by the Word of God such a one is incapable to bear rule, and also by the ancient laws of the Kingdom, which admit none to the Crown of Scotland until he swear to defend the Protestant religion, and which a man of his profession cannot do."

In November of the same year, William of Orange arrived. England and Scotland accepted and acted upon Renwick's estimate of James. Renwick's death was nobly avenged. Within a few short months the principles for which he was martyred were adopted in the Revolution Settlement. The Cameronians at the foot of the scaffold gained a glorious victory. Their memories, written in letters of blood, are enshrined for ever in the hearts of all freedom-loving Scotsmen. Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant; Renwick, Cargill, and the rest of the noble band are not dead; they live with the Immortals.

THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT

CHAPTER VII

THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT

Renwick, the last of the martyrs, was executed in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, in February 1688. In November of the same year, William of Orange landed in England, and with his arrival a new era dawned for Scotland. The cause for which the Covenanters fought and for which Renwick gave up his life, triumphed. The death of the noble and gifted Cameronian leader was the last dramatic episode in the blood-stained career of the Stuarts. In March 1689 the throne of Scotland was declared vacant by the Convention of Estates, but it was not till October 1690 that the General Assembly met. Meanwhile Parliament had not been idle. William had no special aversion to Episcopacy, and in his own mind he evidently failed to understand the violent opposition to it on the part of Scotland. The

King, moreover, had advisers who endeavoured to show him that the establishment of Presbyterianism was not conducive to loyalty and good government. Underlying the opposition of the Stuarts to Presbyterianism was the belief that uniformity of religion would make for the closer political union of the two countries. William no doubt felt the force of the argument; and had he not had at his elbow at this juncture Principal Carstares, a man who combined keen patriotism with great good sense, the Revolution Settlement might have brought not ecclesiastical peace but discord to Scotland. Acting on the advice of Carstares, William announced in his message to Parliament that he would establish such form of Church government as might be most suitable and welcome to the feelings of the people of Scotland. All Acts in favour of Prelacy were annulled; those surviving ministers who were evicted in 1662 were reinstated; the Westminster Confession was ratified, and the Statutes in favour of Presbyterian Church government restored. In short, the Presbyterian Church system was placed upon a settled Parliamentary basis.

The Revolution Settlement

Wide differences of opinion have existed as to the bearing of the Revolution legislation on the question of Spiritual Independence. It has been contended by Dean Stanley that the settlement was really an Erastian settlement, while Presbyterian writers have claimed that the spiritual rights of the Church were duly conserved. Now, it is a remarkable fact that the stricter sect of the Cameronians objected to the settlement, on the ground that the Church was no longer spiritually independent, and, in fact, was tainted with Erastianism. In view of the disputes which broke out at the Disruption, and which have again been revived in our day regarding the relation between Church and State, it is desirable to notice the objections taken by the Cameronians. In their view, the famous Act of 1592, which re-established Presbyterianism, left the relations between Church and State somewhat obscure, and the same obscurity hung over the Revolution settlement. The objections of the Cameronians have been formulated by the historian of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Mathew Hutchison: "The Revolution Settlement did not fully recognise

the right of the Church to meet in Assembly independent of royal authority. It was not enough that the Parliament should by its sole authority decree the restoration of a Presbyterian Establishment; it went further, and settled who were to constitute its judicators. The State decreed who were to form the Church Courts of the new Establishment, and the Church raised no protest against it. Instructions came from high quarters as to the terms on which the curates were to be received into the Church. . . . That was not all. At the Revolution not only did Parliament re-establish Presbyterianism simply by its own authority, but it in the same way ordained the doctrinal creed of the Church. It is true that this creed was the Westminster Confession of Faith; the objection was not to the creed but to the manner of its imposition by civil authority alone, some months before the Church met in General Assembly." In addition, the Cameronians objected to the settlement because the Covenants were ignored.

In many ways the Cameronians were absurdly narrow, but time has shown that

there were good grounds for their objections. In his invaluable book, *The Law of Creeds in Scotland*, Mr Taylor Innes admits that the Revolution Settlement in the matter of the relation of the Church to the Confession leaves much to be desired. The conclusion to which Mr Innes comes is that "the question of independence remained, as it had hitherto done, a doubtful and open one, not to be decided for a century and a half later." How confused were the relations of Church and State, was seen in the attempt of William to get in the thin edge of the Royal Supremacy wedge. An oath of assurance and allegiance to William as King *de jure* had been imposed as a condition of the holding of any office, lay or clerical. To the Presbyterians the oath was not distasteful in the abstract, but highly distasteful it was when imposed as a condition of exercising spiritual functions. Here, indeed, was half-fledged Erastianism. A collision between Church and State seemed inevitable, and one shudders at the thought of what might have happened had not Carstares, the good genius of Scotland, persuaded the King to abate his high pretensions.

One question, however, was to arise which was not to be so easily settled—the question of Patronage, fraught with untold trouble to the Church. At the Revolution, Patronage was abolished. When the Union took place it was distinctly understood that the constitution and arrangements of the Church of Scotland were to be respected. The Union was but five years old when an Act was hurried through Parliament establishing Patronage. The Commission of Assembly met and resolved upon the strongest remonstrances to Queen Anne, pointing out in language which subsequent events proved to be prophetic the heart-burnings and disorders which would ensue. In the words of Macaulay: "The British Legislature violated the Articles of Union, and made a change in the constitution of the Church of Scotland. From that change has flowed almost all the dissent now existing in Scotland. . . . Year after year the General Assembly protested against the violation, but in vain; and from the Act of 1712 undoubtedly flowed every secession and schism that has taken place in the Church of Scotland." It is just possible

that the objectionable Act would not have been allowed to remain in the Statute-book had the spirit which animated the Church in the old days still existed. Now was seen the mischievous effects of the part of the Revolution Settlement against which the Cameronians protested, namely, the infusion of the prelatical element into the Church of Scotland. As Burton remarks: "Whatever hostility the Patronage Act planted, to grow up afterward, it was not received with great enmity by the Church in general, and their protest was feeble."

Two things were aimed at by those who rushed the Patronage Act through Parliament. As Burnet says, it was intended to aim a deadly blow at the Scottish Establishment, and it was hoped by the Jacobites that the unpopularity of the Act would greatly weaken the popularity of the Government in Scotland. That this is correct is plain from the published correspondence of the time. A prominent Jacobite, Lockhart of Carnwath, put the matter thus: "I pressed the Toleration and Patronage Acts more presently that I thought the Presbyterian clergy would be from thence

convinced that the establishment of the Kirk would in time be overturned, as it was obvious that security thereof was not so thoroughly established by the Union as they imagined." How closely the Jacobites associated their own designs with the passing of the Patronage Act and the Toleration Act, is shown by Dr Story, in his *Life of William Carstares:* "The toleration of Episcopalians and the restoration of patronage were advocated for the sole purpose of regaining their lost ascendency to the Episcopalians and Jacobites of Scotland." Here, then, was the difficulty. For the Church to agitate against the new dynasty over the question of Patronage, was to play into the hands of the Jacobites. In the words of Dr Story: "The hope of the Presbyterians was in the Protestant succession. The triumph of Jacobitism and the reaction towards Episcopacy would not long survive the accession of the House of Hanover, and if the Church remained united and peaceable the day of that accession was sure to dawn." Political reasons were allowed to outweigh ecclesiastical considerations; the Spiritual Independence of the Church of Scotland was

subordinated to the exigencies of the dynastic situation.

In the old days the clergy would not have tolerated such a subordination of the highest interests of the Church to purely secular expediences. But at the time of the Revolution Settlement a change had come over the Church. A reaction had set in against the zeal and fervour of Covenanting times; and in addition the national mind was broadening in a new direction created by the Union, the direction of industry and commerce. The spirit of the new era was in favour of a pacific and easy-going Churchism. The clergy, as a body, were very much at ease in Zion. They prided themselves on their moderation, and were painfully anxious to avoid the charge of fanaticism. This new phase is known as Moderatism.

In his *First Principles*, Herbert Spencer shows the important part the law of rhythm plays in the universe. Evolution is shown to be, not the result of uniform motions, but rather the outcome of action and reaction. In the political world the law has abundant illustrations. We have a period of Liberalism,

succeeded by a period of Toryism, and in the world of science and philosophy we have a period of Idealism, followed by a period of Materialism. In religion the working of the same law is distinctly visible. We have periods of spiritual fervour, followed by periods of spiritual lethargy. At the Revolution the spirit of lethargy had crept into the Church. In the previous pages it was indicated that the decay of fervour corresponded with the infusion of the prelatical element into the Church. The admission of large numbers of Episcopalian clergymen, who had accepted the indulgence, men with no zeal for the Presbyterian polity, and with little spiritual fervour, was bound to have a cooling effect on the temperature of the Church. But there were other influences at work in the direction of lethargy. Scotland in the eighteenth century felt the full force of the reaction against the theological interpretation of the universe and human life—a reaction which, starting a century earlier in England, spread to France, and slowly, but surely, infected Scotland. The reaction manifested itself in a dislike of the intellectual methods of the

theologians, and in a revolt against the theological ideal. The ideal of the Church since the days of Knox was a commonwealth resting upon theocratic principles, the laws of which were contained in the Bible. For such a State the appropriate virtues were faith and devout enthusiasm. The supernatural, which received dramatic prominence at the Reformation, coloured Scottish life for more than a century, pushing the natural into the background.

Repressed during the long period of religious and political turmoil, the secular side of Scotland began, after the Union, to assert itself. In the Church the reaction took the shape of a movement in favour of English Deism, which seemed to many of the clergy to present a more liberal resting-place for the mind than the Calvinism of the Confession of Faith. Deism, with its dignified calm and its Epicurean flavour, had great attractions for minds which had grown wearied of what began to be looked upon as the fanaticisms and asceticisms of the Covenanting *régime*. Large sections of the clergy removed John Calvin from the pedestal of honour and substituted

Francis Hutcheson. In *Adam Smith*, in the "Famous Scots" series, the influence which the Deistic conception of life as expounded by Hutcheson had in the development of Moderatism is thus set forth: "Owing to the intensity of the reaction against the Theocratic *régime*, the Humanist movement found ready acceptance among the leading professors and students of Glasgow University. In his *Autobiography*, Dr Alexander Carlyle bears testimony to the intellectual enthusiasm caused by the efforts of Hutcheson and his liberal-minded colleagues to carry into Scotland the torch of reason, which a century before was lit by Descartes and Locke. In consequence of the keenness of the orthodox scent for heresy, the rationalist section put forth reason as an ally of revelation, rather than an antagonist; but the orthodox party, by raising a hue and cry against Hutcheson and Leechman, the Principal of the University, showed that, in their opinion, the trend of the new movement was in the direction of substituting a natural for a supernatural conception of life."

Instinctively it was felt that the logical

issue of Humanism was Deism. In opposition to Calvinism, with its doctrine of election, the theological rationalism of the Hutcheson school postulated the existence of a God, whose ruling desire was the happiness of all His creatures. In opposition to Calvinism, with its doctrine of human depravity, the Hutcheson school represented man as supplied with two monitors, conscience and reason: by means of the one, actions were classified as right or wrong; and by means of the other, knowledge was gained of Nature and her laws. Following from this was the belief that the harmony of interests, which a beneficent Nature sought to promote, could best be reached by individuals respecting one another's right: enlightened self-interest would lead to universal social harmony. Natural liberty thus became the watchword of the theological rationalism, as opposed to the supernatural paternalism of the Calvinists.

Out of the theoretic antagonism of Calvinism and Deism grow two practical antagonisms. Calvinism carries with it the idea of Regeneration as the starting-point of a supernatural life; Deism rests upon Culture as the starting-

point of the natural life. As a consequence, doctrinal teaching in the pulpit ministrations of the Moderates fell into the background, the first place being occupied with ethical teaching. The great realities which sent a shudder of awe through the soul of the Covenanter, the vivid apprehension of the Unseen which fortified the Cameronian in his heroic battle for the truth—these by the Moderates were treated as products of morbid spirituality, excrescences of fanaticism. The Moderates, tired of theological disputation and political turmoil, yearned for a social order in which reigned common-sense, good breeding, good fellowship, culture, and intellectual pursuit of truth.

Perhaps the deepest insight into the nebulous Christianity of the Moderates is to be had from the famous debate on Missions, in which arguments were used against missionary enterprise worthy of men of the most anti-Christian views. Take the following from a speech of a prominent Moderate: "To spread abroad the knowledge of the Gospel among barbarous and heathen nations seems to me highly preposterous, in so far as

it anticipates, nay, as it even reverses, the order of nature. Men must be polished and refined in their manners before they can be properly enlightened in religious truths. Philosophy and learning must, in the nature of things, take the precedence. Indeed, it should seem hardly less absurd to make revelation precede civilisation in the order of time, than to pretend to unfold to a child the Principia of Newton ere he is made at all acquainted with the letters in the alphabet. These ideas seem to me alike founded in error, and therefore I must consider them both as equally romantic and visionary."

The qualities which the Moderates represented were just the qualities which were popular in Scotland of the eighteenth century. At the time of the Union, thoughtful Scotsmen were painfully alive to the backward state of the country in all that pertained to the secular side of life. Hence for a time theology was left in the background, and the leading minds devoted their efforts to literature, philosophy, political economy, industry, and commerce. The old ideal of Spiritual Independence dropped out of sight in the

general scramble for Intellectual Independence, Social, Industrial, and Commercial Progress. So occupied was the eighteenth century with the Seen and Temporal that the pressure of the Unseen and Eternal was scarcely felt. Clearly, a Church party which took for its theological fundamentals not Redemption and Regeneration, but Culture and Conduct, would not worry itself over Spiritual Independence. Its ecclesiastical polity would be largely saturated with Secularism. The State, rather than the Church, would naturally occupy the place of authority. Naturally, too, the party of culture would look down somewhat scornfully upon the people, and their claim to have the last word in the election of ministers. What could the vulgar know of the qualities necessary to a cultured ministry? The temperament of the Moderates and their intellectual aloofness, not to say pride, and dislike to the simple verities and fervour of the Gospel, gave them a decided bias in the direction of Patronage as a method of pulpit supply.

Over against the Moderates were the Evangelicals, who placed great stress on the call of the people as opposed to the presentation of

the patron. Abolish the call, and you strike at the root of the idea of Spiritual Independence. Establish Patronage, and no longer is Christ, but the patron, the Head of the Church. Moderatism and Patronage, and Evangelicalism and the Call, represent two antagonistic theories of religious life and Church polity; the one by a side-wind representing Erastianism, and the other taking its stand on the old historic watchword of Spiritual Independence. The struggle with Patronage proved simply to be another phrase of the old question, raised at the time of Knox and Melville—Shall the Church be free to regulate its own affairs in obedience to its Divine Head, or shall it be controlled by outside authorities?

THE SECESSIONS

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECESSIONS

THE Revolution Settlement did not put an end to the battle for Spiritual Independence. What happened as the outcome of the settlement was that the great struggle entered upon a new phase. Up till now the battle had been between the Church and the Crown. In defending the rights of the Church, the Reformers and the Covenanters asserted principles which led to the limitation of the power of the Crown, and paved the way for the great Constitutional Settlement of 1688. The battle, however, was but half won. The revival of Patronage showed a disposition on the part of the Crown to revert to the old bad practices of the Stuart dynasty. In this position it was encouraged by the rise of a party in the Church known as the Moderate

party, whose theological laxity led them naturally to look approvingly on the attempts of the Crown to subordinate the Church to the State.

For a number of years Patronage was not felt as an oppressive evil. Patrons and Presbyteries were careful to appoint ministers who were acceptable to the people. Preachers were careful to accept presentation on the understanding that there was also a call from the people. For about twenty years after the revival of Patronage the call was considered the essential condition in the presentation of a minister. There were those in the Church, besides, who disliked from the outset this Patronage business. They still held by the old Reforming and Covenanting ideal of a Church resting on two definite principles—freedom from State interferences and freedom of the people to elect their own minister.

The leaders of this party, small compared with the Moderates, were Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. As early as 1715 we find Ebenezer carrying his Presbytery with him in a declaration, that "since the relation of pastor to people is plainly founded on the election, choice,

or free consent of the people, they would go into no settlement but where the people had freedom in electing their ministers." The question, however, did not reach an acute stage till, in 1731, the General Assembly, in which the Moderates were in a majority, approved of an Act concerning the planting of vacant churches, by which it was declared that in cases where the appointment of a vacancy devolved upon a Presbytery the election should lie with "the heritors, being Protestant, and the elders."

Here, indeed, was a momentous step. Hitherto the Church had fought with the State over the question of Spiritual Independence, but now the Church itself, through the Moderate party, was striking a blow at a crucial element in her Spiritual Independence. As Dr MacEwen, in his illuminating life of the Erskines, puts it: "In the settlement of 1690, and the Patronage Bill of 1712, there was neither precedent nor parallel to such legislation. There had been Parliamentary enactments; this was a voluntary surrender by the Church of rights which she had hitherto claimed."

Here, indeed, was something worse than the continued attack of the State upon the Church; here was a great betrayal. At this point it is necessary to notice the close connection between this ecclesiastical procedure of the Moderates and their theological laxity. The ministers acceptable to the people were of the Evangelical type. If Moderatism was to make headway, it was necessary to get ministers appointed without the consent of the people. It is highly suggestive that the party in the Church which was opposed to forced settlements was the Evangelical party, called the Marrowmen, from a theological work unearthed by Boston, and which was highly prized by the Evangelicals, called the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*—a book, by the way, which was the object of great dislike by the Moderates. The popular outcry against the action of the Moderates took a dual form—"We have a right to hear the Gospel, and we have a right to choose our own minister."

The Moderates had different ideas from the people of what constituted the Gospel, and in order to carry out their ideas it was necessary to prevent the people electing their own

ministers. By the passing of the resolution of 1731, the Moderates raised a hornets' nest about their ears. The Act, it was plain, was not popular with Presbyteries. The Assembly determined to carry matters with a high hand. At Kinross there was a disputed settlement, and the Assembly, by declining to hear the representatives of the dissentients, and ordering the Dunfermline Presbytery to proceed with the settlement, made it plain that they, even by unconstitutional methods, were determined to strike a blow at the Spiritual Independence of the people in the matter of the call. The two Erskines protested, on the ground "that the Act had no warrant from the Word of God, was inconsistent with the constitution of the Church, and ignored the sole Headship of Christ over the Church."

The Assembly by a large majority, in defiance of the Barrier Act, which provides for proposals of vital changes in the constitution being sent down to the Presbyteries, declared the Act to be the law of the Church. Ebenezer Erskine protested, but the Assembly refused to accept the protest. He was not long in making his voice heard. He took opportunity at the

opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling to deliver himself of strong expressions on the situation. No Assembly since the Revolution, he said, had adequately asserted the Headship of Christ. Time-serving and "peddling in politics" had distinguished the Church leaders. Many of the heritors, he pointed out, were Jacobites, and opposed to the Protestant succession, and bringing into parishes ministers "who snuffed the light of Christ out of the Church with harangues and flourishes of morality." Erskine saw clearly that Patronage and theological laxity went hand in hand, and if there was any doubt on this point it was dispelled by the action of the Assembly in dealing with the *Marrow of Divinity*, which met with the severe condemnation of the Moderates. Erskine denounced the Act passed by the Assembly as inconsistent with the principles and Confession of the Church. The Assembly took up the case of Erskine.

It is not necessary to enter into details of the Assembly's procedure. Suffice it to say that Ebenezer Erskine, and the other ministers who had signed the protest against the action of the Assembly, William Wilson, Alexander

Moncrieff, and James Fisher, were literally turned out of the Church, and thus was laid the foundation of the Secession Church. It is not necessary to detail the events of the second Secession nineteen years later, when Mr Gillespie, Carnock, was thrust out of the Church for refusing to assent to a forced settlement at Inverkeithing. Out of these battles for Spiritual Independence grew the Secession and the Relief Churches, which about a hundred years afterwards joined hands and became the United Presbyterian Church—a body which once more has had to unfurl the standard of religious liberty which was so manfully held aloft by Erskine and Gillespie. An important point emerges here. What did the Seceders consider the fundamental principle of the Scottish Church? In seceding from the Established Church, did Erskine and his friends consider that they had parted with the fundamental principle of the Scottish Church? If the Establishment principle was the fundamental principle, clearly they had departed from the great principles and traditions of the Church of the Reformation. Now it is important to notice that the Seceders based

their action on the ground that the Church by law established had departed from the fundamental principle of the Reformation Church—namely, Spiritual Independence.

How clearly Ebenezer Erskine saw that the fundamental principle for which the Seceders contended had nothing to do with Establishment, but was inherently a matter of Spiritual Independence, is plain from a letter which he wrote in 1735 to the Stirling Presbytery, declining the Moderatorship. In that letter Erskine said, "There is a difference to be made betwixt the Established Church of Scotland and the Church of Christ in Scotland, for I reckon that the last is in a great measure driven into the wilderness by the first. And since God, in His adorable providence, has led us into the wilderness with her, I judge it our duty to tarry with her for a while there, and to prefer her afflictions to all the advantages of a legal establishment in communion with judicatories as they stand at present. Whenever it shall appear to me that the Established judicatories are heartily adopting the cause of Christ, purging and planting His house according to His will and the solemn Covenant

lying upon the land, and giving justice to His oppressed members throughout Scotland, I hope not only to return to communion, but to enter the gates of our Zion with praise."

Here again we come unexpectedly upon the fact, emphasised at every critical period of Scottish ecclesiastical history, that in the eyes of the great leaders of the Church, the fundamental principle was not Establishment but Spiritual Independence. Knox and his fellow-Protestants established a national religion in Scotland seven years before the legal or Parliamentary Establishment was set up. During the reign of Episcopacy the Presbyterians continued though disestablished to contend for Spiritual Independence as the great fundamental principle of the Church. And now we have Erskine and his friends leaving the Establishment on the ground that it was unfaithful to Spiritual Independence. Not for one instant did they imagine that by leaving the Establishment they were abandoning the fundamental principle of the Church. In reality they seceded from the Establishment in order that, untrammelled by the State, they might be able to give due effect to what they

believed the real, essential, vital, and fundamental principle—Spiritual Independence.

The reader must have been struck by the fact that amid all conflicts of religious and ecclesiastical Scotland, one conflict stands out in bold relief—the conflict for Spiritual Independence. In the days of Knox, it was supposed that the independence of the Church spiritually would be greatly fortified by the legal establishment of Protestantism. The Papacy, in the course of its long career, had subordinated to its own ends the Civil Power. By so doing it had encroached upon the secular liberties of the people, and it was felt to be a necessity that in the act of claiming Spiritual Independence the Protestant Church should at the same time claim Civil Liberty. At the time, that apparently could only be done by confronting one government with another—a government ruling in the interests of Romanism by a government ruling in the interests of Protestantism. The establishment of Protestantism therefore became an important means to the great ultimate end of the Church—Spiritual Independence. It is needful to observe this distinction, because

the Lord Chancellor and the majority of the Law Lords made it appear by their decision that the principle of Establishment was really fundamental. If it were a fundamental principle, how comes it that time and again we find zealous workers under Establishment willing to dispense with it? If the Lord Chancellor is right, we must conclude that during the time that Episcopacy reigned there was no National Church, because there was no Established Church! And if the National Church existed in Scotland in full vigour and zeal when it was disestablished, we must conclude, as it could not exist without a fundamental principle, that principle could not be Establishment. The quarrel with the State was that it was using the Establishment to curtail Spiritual Independence. The Church rather than submit to this was ready to abandon the Establishment —which was really a secondary principle, a means to an end—in order to save Spiritual Independence, which was the fundamental principle, the end itself. Now it so happened that we have, in a document issued by the Secession leaders in justification of the step

they took, a clear discussion of the very points raised by the Law Lords. One of Erskine's friends, the Rev. John Currie, of Kinglassie, for some reason or other deserted the cause of Secession, and published a pamphlet on Separatism, in which the conduct of the Seceders was adversely criticised. One of the seceders, Wilson, of Perth, was deputed to reply to Currie, which he did in 1739, under the title "Defence of the Reformation principles of the Church of Scotland."

The reply, which received the official stamp of the Secession leaders, is an important contribution to the present controversy. Dr MacEwen, in his book on Ebenezer Erskine, has admirably summarised it. The general argument of the Defence is that the Secession was justified by the public and flagrant failure of the Established Church to maintain the historical principles of the Church of Scotland. It disavows the view that the civil magistrate has no right to meddle with religion, and acknowledges that the legal establishment of religion is good in itself, and may be serviceable to the Church. But, it says, legal Establishment has become a snare and has subjected

the Church to irreligious influences, so that outward communion with her has become a hindrance to the discharge of duty. The civil bond, created and maintained by Parliaments, is not the true bond of the Church. Her unity is spiritual. It is one thing to depart from a particular province or National Church, on account of corruptions, and another thing to separate from the Catholic visible Church. The National Church, as represented by the present judicatories has not the Scriptural character of a Church of the living God. Since she does not maintain the standards, she cannot be said to hold them.

Loyalty to the Headship of Christ and care for the edification of His body, zeal for the purity of His institutions, and for the liberty He has given His people, must be the chief concern of office-bearers; and to maintain a profane syncretism or coalition with the enemies of these, for the value of a civil bond, is unjustifiable. This testimony is all the stronger because the Seceders when they broke away from the Establishment were not Voluntaries. Had they been Voluntaries, it might have been argued that they left the

Church because they refused to accept the Establishment principle. They had no quarrel with the Establishment principle as such ; their grievance was that the Establishment principle was treated as fundamental. In their view, it was at best a secondary principle, a means to an end, a means of securing to the Church Spiritual Independence. The Seceders held that the supreme concern was the Headship of Christ, and the State's interference in matters spiritual was at once resented when it encroached upon the Divine Headship.

Here we find historic confirmation of the memorable words of Professor Flint : " There is no principle of Establishment. It is very common indeed to speak of such a principle, but those who have done so have either inaccurately used the designation as synonymous with 'national religion,' or have even in thought confounded Establishment with national religion and fact with principle. Strictly and properly speaking, I repeat, there is no Establishment principle." Elaborating his argument, Professor Flint went on to say : " Establishment is not a principle, but simply a fact. It can only be maintained to be an

application of the principle of national religion. Applications, however, vary with times and places, and must conform to circumstances. Establishment of a Church as national may be plainly right and reasonable at one time, and in a given set of circumstances, and at another time and in another set of circumstances absurd and unjust."

The mistake made by the Moderates, and which led to the Secession and the Disruption, was in confounding the idea of Establishment with the idea of national religion. In other words, the Moderates erred, as the Lord Chancellor erred, in making the Establishment principle fundamental, and the Church almost a creation of Parliament, a branch, so to speak, of the Civil Service. The Seceders went their own way, holding fast by the great historic principle of Spiritual Independence. The Moderates went their way, laying stress on the Establishment principle, which, in practice, meant the subordination of the Church to authorities and influences, which gradually encroached upon the higher spiritual freedom and interests of the Church. After the Secession, the Church, in a state of alarm,

showed a disposition to make concessions, but this spirit passed away, and in the hands of advanced Moderates, like Principal Robertson, the Establishment went further and further on the path of ecclesiastical despotism.

In the process of narrowing the power of the people through their congregations and Presbyteries, the leaders of the Moderates at last reached the final step of treating the call as superfluous. The law, it was contended, gave to the patrons the right to nominate whom they pleased to vacant charges, and what the Church had to do was to give legal effect to their presentation. The duty of the Church was to carry out the desires of the State as embodied in the Act of Parliament. Here was the Establishment principle with a vengeance! here, indeed, was a dramatic effort to subordinate Spiritual Independence to State-made law! We have already pointed to the close connection which existed between patronage and theological laxity. Every blow struck at Spiritual Independence had a deadening effect on the spiritual life of the Church. The reason is not far to seek. Abolish the call and leave the appointment of the minister

in the hands of men of no religion, or of a kind of rationalised Christianity, and the inevitable result is just what was seen in the eighteenth century, the reduction of the sermon to the level of a moral essay, and the substitution of a kind of Epicurean religion, a blend of Paganism and Deism, in the place of the fervour of Evangelicalism.

The kind of stuff that was palmed off upon the people is admirably illustrated by the remark of David Hume to Jupiter Carlyle of Inveresk, after hearing him preach for Home, the author of the famous but now extinct tragedy of "Douglas." "What did you mean," said Hume, "by treating John's congregation to-day to one of Cicero's Academics? I did not think such heathen morality could have passed in East Lothian." In writing to Bishop Warburton, Dr John Erskine referred to the paganised Christian divines who were found in the Church of Scotland under the name of Latitudinarians, but he adds: "Socinus lies at the root."

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

CHAPTER IX

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

With the Revolution Settlement a change passed over the religious life of Scotland. The national mind and energy, long confined within narrow ecclesiastical channels, began to expand in the directions of industry, commerce, literature, and philosophy. The old theological doctrine of man and his depravity began to give way before the new Deistic doctrine of man and his natural goodness, and as a consequence a system of naturalism in religion took the place of supernaturalism. The old watchword of Regeneration was discarded for the new watchword, Culture. What was needed for man was not so much the implanting of a new nature as the careful cultivation of the old. Here we have the key to the moral essays of the Moderates and their intense dislike of the

old grim tenets of Calvinism. There can be no doubt that for the rapid rise of Moderatism some blame must be attached to the Church. In its endeavour to carry out the theocratic ideal, the Church frowned upon all kinds of developments that lay outside of the theological field. A sharp line was drawn between sacred and secular, and everything that did not make directly for saintliness of life was treated as alien to the theocratic ideal. All that could not come directly under the category of grace was relegated to the realm of the unregenerate.

As a reaction against the somewhat narrow supernaturalism of the Covenanting and Evangelical parties, the Moderates went to the other extreme—they reduced the supernatural to a minimum. God was thought of as a monarch who had relegated the universe to second causes—a monarch who reigned but did not govern. Man, instead of being weak and depraved, was endowed with reason, which only needed to be cultivated by intellectual methods to lead to an improved social state. The notes of Calvinism were the abiding presence of Deity, the insufficiency of reason,

and the constant need of supernatural help. The notes of Moderatism were the aloofness of Deity, the self-sufficiency of man, and a reliance upon natural methods. The Moderates had some justification for their antagonism in the fact that the Church, instead of welcoming the revival of learning and literature, seemed anxious to keep it at arm's-length.

Thus we find the Church eagerly seeking to make the Universities subservient to the Church by the simple but disastrous method of making professors subscribe to the Confession of Faith. In the interests of theology the clergy claimed the right to superintend the teaching given in schools and colleges. How far behind Scotland was on the intellectual road is seen from Carlyle's remarks in his essay on Burns: "For a long period after Scotland became British we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectator* our own good Thomas Boston was writing, with noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man.* Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic;

Theologic ink and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole list of followers attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our fervid genius there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous, except, perhaps, the national impetuosity of intellect which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English. Our culture was exceedingly French. It was by studying Batteaux and Boileau that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and a philosopher. It was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political reflections; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich to borrow, and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them; but neither had he aught to do with Scotland. Edinburgh was but the lodging and laboratory in which he

not so much morally lived as metaphysically investigated."

To the Moderates belongs the credit of enabling Scotland to participate in the intellectual revival. But in the day of their triumph they received a rude shock. The theory of life with which they hoped to break the power of Calvinism proved too fragile to bear the test of stern reality. The French Revolution, which caused a volcanic disturbance in all kinds of movements, intellectual as well as political, struck a mortal blow at Scottish Moderatism.

How great was the effect of the Revolution on the Moderatism of Scotland is seen in a remark of George Combe in his little book on America. In America Combe was asked how he accounted for the great change that had taken place in the Scottish clergy since the days of Robertson and Blair. "The only account of it," says Combe, "which I could give was one which I had received from an aged friend who was long an elder of one of the churches in Edinburgh, and who himself had witnessed the change. 'Before the breaking out of the French Revolution,' said he, 'the

Scottish clergy were distinguished for the liberality of their religious sentiments, and public rumour mentioned the intention of their leaders to propose a revisal of the standards of the Church. The men of property, the lawyers, and distinguished physicians, in general, partook of the same spirit, and the people would have followed in their train without much hesitation. In this state of the public mind the French Revolution broke out: the throne and the altar were overturned in France and trampled under foot. The Government and the owners of property in Great Britain became alarmed at the progress of French principles among their own people, and combined to resist them. Their great object was to rear bulwarks around the throne for the protection through it of their private interests, and viewing the altar as the principal pillar of State, they became zealous supporters of religious institutions and observances. I then saw,' said the elder, 'individuals of great political influence, who for many years before had never entered a church door, ostentatiously walking up and down the High Street of Edinburgh with their Bibles in their hands to

attend public worship. Their efforts were successful. A vast zeal was instantaneously evoked and put in action, and serious impressions were communicated to the young.'"

A religious revival, the outcome of panic, would not long have sustained itself against the intellectual forces of the time, had not what may be called the democratic factor appeared to upset the calculations of the drawing-room philosophers of the Enlightenment. In all their speculations of the future of humanity, and in their forecast of the spread of reason, the eighteenth century optimists forgot that the people had not participated in the so-called blessings of Rationalism. For them the age of reason was simply a name. Intellectually the masses were living in the seventeenth century, the century of theologic and theocratic ideas.

The effect of the Industrial Revolution in producing the religious reaction is not sufficiently noticed by historians of the period. Through neglect of this factor we are apt to over-estimate the extent of the rationalistic movement of the eighteenth century. The movement never reached the masses; conse-

quently when the people, attracted by rising industries, began to congregate in large centres, they were so much inflammable material for any religious enthusiast who was on their own mental level. Methodism in England, for instance, was the product of a state of mind far removed from the dry, cold formalism of the Established religion—a state of mind that was beyond both the dull orthodoxy of English clerics and the unsettling criticisms of English free-thinkers.

Evangelicalism in Scotland had a like origin. Like Methodism, it drew its inspiration from the masses, though as society progressed and the middle classes began to become prominent, Evangelicalism spread in the Church and gave impetus to religious zeal as the true philosophy of life. In addition to these causes of Calvinistic reaction, another must be noted, namely, the failure of Deism as the philosophy of life. In the presence of the great outburst of revolution in France the drawing-room optimism of the Scottish school seemed an elegant mockery. In face of the actual facts of life, talk about a benevolent Deity, a self-centred humanity obeying the dictates of

reason, and a social order working harmoniously under the guidance of enlightened self-interest, seemed grotesque. As a theory of God and man, Calvinism, with its stern theology and its dogma of human depravity, seemed more in touch with reality than the sentimental vapourings of bloodless philosophers. Notwithstanding its fundamental weakness, the Scottish School did much to foster intellectualism. By diverting the public mind from purely theological topics, it gave a great impulse to the study of science, the cultivation of philosophy and literature. By its optimism, Moderatism awakened faith in human nature, and though its faith was excessive the error worked on the practical side for good. Upon the Spiritual Independence of the Church the influence of Moderatism was detrimental. What Moderatism aimed at was the limiting of the influence and power of the Church, and that could best be done by exalting the influence and power of the State. It followed as a matter of course that the road to Spiritual Independence lay through increased religious zeal. And thus it happened that the ultimate outcome of the Evangelical revival was

a conflict with the State over Spiritual Independence.

Under the reign of Moderatism it was plain that no vigorous protest would be made against the encroachment of the State on the powers of the Church. It is a remarkable fact that an era of religious indifferentism is not favourable to the growth of political enthusiasm. People who are not keenly alive to the necessity of contending for their religious rights will not readily enter into the arena of conflict on behalf of their political rights. Times of great religious upheaval are always favourable to the cause of political emancipation. Politically, Scotland owes much to the religious contendings of the Reformation and Covenanting periods, and after the Union we find the same relation between religion and political fervour. It would not be difficult to trace such reforms as the extension of the franchise, the abolition of slavery, and the increased interest in the poor generally, to the revival of Evangelicalism which ushered in the nineteenth century. For our immediate purpose, what is necessary is to trace the connection between the

Evangelical revival and the great historic controversy over Spiritual Independence.

How necessary was a revival, how dead spiritually Moderatism had become, is clearly shown by the biographer of the Haldanes. He gives as a "proof of the degraded state of the dominant party in the Church a reference to a Presbytery dinner, to which James Haldane was invited in Edinburgh, upon a special occasion, and to which he had gone, hoping for useful, perhaps spiritual, or at least rational, conversation on those topics in which he was now chiefly interested. Instead of this the company were treated to Bacchanalian songs, the folly of which was aggravated into something approaching to wickedness by an admixture of ridiculous if not profane allusions to their own sacred callings and functions." The burden of one song was the prescription of a "bumper of Nottingham ale in the pulpit at the different stages of a Presbyterian discourse." This testimony receives striking verification from the *Quarterly Review*, which, dealing with the religious condition of Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century, had the following: "We should be sorry to

malign either the living or the dead; but it is our deliberate opinion that with the exception of France, there was not a more infidel country on the face of the earth than Scotland sixty or seventy years ago; and we further believe that she was mainly indebted for this bad distinction to the active exertion of her professors, and the indifference, disguised under the title of moderation, which generally distinguished the teachings of her more accomplished and influential clergy."

The reaction against Moderatism paved the way for an increased interest in Evangelical religion—an interest which had as much to do with the rapid spread of the Secession movement under Erskine and Gillespie as on the question of Patronage. The common people flocked to the Secession churches, because they received there the spiritual nutriment which was denied them in the Established Church. The historian of the United Presbyterian Church mentions thirty-five Secession congregations which resulted from the "negative theology" of the Established clergy. In a previous page reference was made to the attitude towards

foreign missions of the Moderates, on the ground that when there was much to be done at home it was a mistake "to scatter our forces and spend our strength on foreign service."

The remarkable fact is, that when earnest men like the Haldanes set themselves to the work of evangelising the heathen at home, the strongest opposition came from the Moderates, though it must be admitted that the dissenting congregations were by no means effusive in their treatment of the Haldanes, who must be set down as the great pioneers of Evangelicalism in the early years of the nineteenth century. The Haldanes have not had justice done them by ecclesiastical historians. Presbyterianism has absorbed so much of the dramatic element of Scottish history that too little attention has been paid to the good work done by the Haldanes. They did much to raise the missionary spirit in Scotland, and by their zeal in the work of evangelising the masses, contributed greatly to the rise of what may be called the spiritual democracy which took dramatic shape at the Disruption. While the Moderates were declining in prestige and

influence, the Evangelicals were fortunate in the possession of several ministers of great intellectual ability and religious fervour.

Three men stand out in clear light at this period — Dr Thomas M'Crie, Dr Andrew Thomson, and Dr Thomas Chalmers. M'Crie, a representative of the old Cameronian spirit, combined with the warmest Evangelicalism a marvellously keen intellect. In an age when it was the custom to sneer at religious zeal he set himself to defend with great historical insight and literary effectiveness the Reformers and the Covenanters. In his biographies of Knox and Melville we find this minister of an unpopular sect equipped with a wealth of intellectual resource, a masterly insight into political philosophy, and a sturdy devotion to the great principle of religious and civil liberty. His influence in reviving the doctrines and principles of the Reformers must have been enormous. The extent of his influence may well be gauged by the reference to him by Hugh Miller in one of his masterly sketches: "The memory of Knox and his coadjutors was pilloried in the literature of the country. Every witling, as he passed by, flung his handful of

filth; and that portion of our Presbyterian people who, looking into the past through the religious medium, and believing that our Reformers as men awakened to a sense of the truth, were far different from what our literati represented them, could only retain for themselves the juster estimate of their fathers regarding them, without influencing in the least the opinions of their contemporaries. Such was the state of things when a nameless champion entered the lists, and threw down his gauntlet in the cause of Knox and the Reformers. The literature of a whole century went down before him—Hume, Stuart, Tytler, Robertson, and the poets—all the great names among the dead; and the living—men of a lower stature—he foiled with scarce half an effort. All went down who opposed him, and the rest stood wearily aloof."

In presence of such a master mind well might Dr Andrew Thomson exclaim, after listening to one of M'Crie's discourses, "There now is something far beyond the compass of any minister in the Establishment." M'Crie gave to the cause of Scottish Dissent intellectual prestige, and to the cause of Scottish

Evangelicalism spiritual power. Dr Andrew Thomson did not aspire to the widespread intellectual influence of M'Crie. His power was conspicuously of the pulpit kind. He broke through the frigidity of Moderatism, and instead of moral essays of the Blair type he thundered forth the old doctrines in new tones. Dr Thomson's labours in the cause of religious literature should not be forgotten. *The Christian Instructor*, which he established, has been claimed to do for the Evangelical movement at that day what the *Tracts for the Times* did for the Oxford movement. *The Christian Instructor* became the literary centre round which the new spirit of religious democracy rallied.

But it is to Chalmers that the credit belongs of bringing about the entire overthrow of Moderatism and giving to the Evangelical movement its greatest impetus. Chalmers began as a Moderate, and ended as an Evangelical. It is not necessary here to detail the career of Chalmers. Suffice it to say that in him there existed an irrepressible desire to translate his religious ideals into practical reality. In his mind the social ideal bulked

largely. Christianity in his view was intended to bring in the Kingdom of God in the form of a regenerated society, as well as to regenerate the individual. Out of this grew his strong interest in Political Economy, and particularly that branch now known as Sociology. But how was society to be regenerated? The great and potent means was the preaching of the Gospel, but how could the Gospel be effectively preached unless by filling the pulpits with zealous ministers, and spreading Gospel ordinances among the home heathen? The first requisite of a successful Church extension scheme is the earnest ministry, and this was not easily secured under the system of Patronage. Just as in the political sphere the people were clamouring for the right to elect their rulers, so in the ecclesiastical sphere the democratic demand which Patronage suppressed, that of the right of congregations to elect their minister, reasserted itself with great vigour. The Evangelical revival led to an Ecclesiastical revival, and the result was the Ten Years' Conflict, culminating in the Disruption.

THE TEN YEARS' CONFLICT

CHAPTER X

THE TEN YEARS' CONFLICT

The result of the Evangelical revival was an ecclesiastical revival. It follows naturally that a Church which has lost touch with spiritual realities will not display much interest in politico-ecclesiastical questions. Under the reign of the Moderates, the aim of the Church leaders was to extend the sphere of State control as a check upon what was described as religious fanaticism. The far-reaching issues involved in the Evangelical revival were, of course, hidden from the actors in the preliminary stages of the Disruption controversy. It was not long, however, before it became clear that the religious differences between the Evangelicals and the Moderates would lead to politico-ecclesiastical differences. Under the Moder-

ates the system of Pluralities was openly countenanced.

The duties of the ministry lay so lightly upon the Moderates that it was considered the most natural thing in the world that one man should be at the same time minister of a parish and also hold a University Professorship. In his early Moderate days Chalmers would have seen nothing amiss with such an arrangement. After he became an Evangelical, Chalmers rose to a sense of the significance of the principle which underlay the question of Pluralities—a question which, in a remarkable manner, was a precursor of the Disruption controversy. About the year 1812, a Mr Ferrie, Professor of Civil History in the University of St Andrews, was presented to the living of Kilconquhar. The Presbytery of St Andrews refused to admit him without an assurance that he would resign his Professorship. Out of this dispute emerged the important question as to the duty of the Civil Power if the Church persisted in its opposition to Pluralities. There are on record the views of Chalmers on the dispute—views which, in the light of after events, are highly interesting. The opinion of Chalmers

is thus given: "I do not stop a moment at the consideration that, though we should exclude Mr Ferrie from the charge of Kilconquhar, the Court of Session would find him to be legal proprietor of the stipend. Should this ever be suffered to enter as an element into our deliberations, we would be fallen indeed. It is our part to walk in our integrity, nor to suffer the allurement of civil advantages, or the threat of civil deprivations, to divert us by a single inch from the path which lies before us. When we exclude a man from the charge of a parish, we do it on grounds which are purely ecclesiastical. On these grounds we are alone the judges. . . . I shall suffer no authority on earth to lay such fetters upon my conscience; and sitting in judgment as we do, moderator, upon the interests and preparation of a whole people for another world, woe be to us if we flinch by a single iota from what is right, by the powers of the world being brought to bear upon us."

It is important to notice that we have in the dispute over Pluralities the germs of the great Disruption controversy. That this is so is admirably seen in the powerful speech

delivered by a prominent Churchman, Dr M'Gill. Dr M'Gill, alluding to the language of the Lord President, said: "Nothing has more surprised me than the doctrine, which I never expected to hear in this Assembly, that the Church of Scotland has not the power to declare what shall be the qualifications of its own ministers. The powers of this Church, he (the Lord President) maintained, were founded only upon Acts of Parliament; these fixed the qualifications of ministers, and we had no power but to administer them; and on Parliament depended the exercise of that power which from Parliament we received. This, sir, is indeed a sweeping doctrine, but, happily for us, it is as untrue as it is dangerous. Our right to determine the qualifications of our ministers flows not from Acts of Parliament. I maintain the powers and rights of the Church of Scotland, in direct opposition to the opinion so strongly expressed, to determine the qualifications of its ministers; that their right in this matter did not originate with Parliament; that Parliament left this right entire and untouched to the Courts of this Church;

nay, that of this right it is not in the power of Parliament to deprive them. . . . The religion of Scotland was previously embraced by the people on the authority of the Word of God before it was sanctioned by Parliament."

It is plain from the attitude taken up on the subject of Pluralities that several years before the Disruption politico-ecclesiastical principles divided the parties in the Church, and needed only to be brought out of the academic into the popular arena to burst forth with volcanic energy. The jealousy of State interference, and their dislike of the Erastianism of the Moderates, led the Evangelicals to take every opportunity to assert the principle of Spiritual Independence.

A dramatic opportunity arose in 1820 at the time of the domestic scandal in the Royal Family. An order of the Privy Council was issued authoritatively to all the ministers of the Church of Scotland, requiring every minister and preacher to pray in the pulpit "for his most sacred Majesty King George and all the Royal Family." The object of the order was to exclude the name of Queen Caroline from public prayers. Dr Andrew

Thomson saw in the order an attempt on the part of the State to dictate to the Church. He prayed for the King and Royal Family, as he always did, but he also prayed for the Queen. At the meeting of the General Assembly in May, Dr Thomson brought the subject up in the form of a complaint that the State was encroaching on the Spiritual Independence of the Church. Dr Thomson, in his speech, contended that the Scottish Church had no Spiritual Head on earth, and that it was outside the province of the Privy Council to issue such an order. No greater interference with the Church, he declared, could be imagined than that of assuming the power of regulating the prayers of its ministers and preachers. The Court party got out of the difficulty by arguing that the order of the Privy Council was not intended as as authoritative command, but merely as indicating the King's wish. But after all, the disputes about Pluralities and the Privy Council order, however excellent as straws which showed the direction of the wind, were more academic than popular.

The real question round which the battle of Spiritual Independence was to be fought was

the right of the people to elect their own ministers. The Evangelical party strained every nerve to overcome the deadening effects of Patronage. The people, it was plain, would not submit indefinitely to a method of thrusting ministers upon them against their will. But the crucial question was how best to deal with the difficulty. Two different solutions of the problem were abroad. Sturdy Presbyterians like Dr Andrew Thomson and Dr M'Crie were in favour of drastic measures. In their view, no real remedy was possible short of the abolition of Patronage.

Dr Chalmers, on the other hand, had a lifelong leaning towards Toryism. He did not like Patronage; but he had also a dislike to the popular election of ministers. His distrust of what would now be called the democracy led Chalmers to seek a middle road, and this he found by giving prominence to the Call. By means of the Call, which was left untouched by the Act of Queen Anne, though under the Moderates it had become a dead letter, Chalmers hoped to find a solution of the problem. Chalmers and his party were moderate in their demands. Leaving the ques-

tion of Patronage untouched, they thought that for all practical purposes the interests of the Church would be rightly served by providing that no minister should be intruded into a parish when he was objected to by a majority of the male heads of families who were communicants.

The watchword of Dr Chalmers, therefore, was not abolition of Patronage, but Non-Intrusion. The next question was how best to get such an arrangement carried into effect. The view of Chalmers was that a veto law should be passed concurrently by the Church and the State embodying the Non-Intrusion idea. He put his plan aside for that of Lord Moncreiff, whose eminence as a Churchman and a lawyer gave his opinions great weight. Lord Moncreiff contended that there was no need to consult the State on the matter, as the Church by its constitution had power to act on its own initiative. This was the origin of the famous Veto Act, which led to the Ten Years' Conflict, the outcome of which was the Disruption. Looked at from this distance, it is now seen that the Evangelical party made a mistake—a kind of mistake which, unfortunately

for the ecclesiastical peace of Scotland, has been repeatedly made at critical periods in her history. For instance, every reader of Church history now sees that the Revolution Settlement was really no settlement in the final sense of the term. It left important aspects of the ecclesiastical problem unsolved, thereby contributing to the uprising of new difficulties in the shape of Patronage. At the time when the conscience of the Church was disturbed over Patronage in the early days of Chalmers, and a crisis was approaching, the leaders of the Evangelical party took a wrong turning, by preferring an indirect to a direct road. It is easy to see now that the Veto Act led the Church into further difficulties, culminating in the Disruption. What the Evangelical leaders should have done is now plain. The Patronage Act, passed in the reign of Queen Anne, was a distinct breach of the Revolution Settlement, and on that ground it should have been attacked and got rid of. With its abolition the way would have been clear for the reassertion of the old, historical principle of Spiritual Independence. Had that been done, the history of Scotland for the last

seventy years would have been very different.

The General Assembly of 1834, which passed the Veto Law, passed also what was known as the Chapel Act. By virtue of it, ministers of what was termed Chapels of Ease were placed on an equality with their brethren in parish charges. Previous to that, ministers of Chapels of Ease laboured under certain disabilities. They were preachers pure and simple, and were excluded from the Church Courts. Such a distinction between the ministers of the same denominations was alien to the spirit of Presbyterianism, and accordingly the Chapel Act was passed in order to put an end to the anomaly. By the Veto Law the Church sought to vindicate the right of the people to protect themselves from the intrusion of ministers who did not meet with their approval. By the Chapel Act the Church sought to vindicate the right of ministers to discharge all the duties of the pastoral office.

Round these two measures of the General Assembly of 1834 there waged what was known as the Ten Years' Conflict. It was

no new conflict—simply a new phase of the old conflict. Shall the Church in her own spiritual sphere be free to obey her Divine Head? Or shall she be compelled to ask the State for liberty to pass measures which she believes to be necessary for her spiritual well-being? If the former, then the Headship of Christ is established. If the latter, then we are in presence of full-blown Erastianism—the head of the Church in that case is the King as represented by Parliament. These two principles had been in almost constant collision all through the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. At the time of the Reformation the Church had her champion on behalf of Spiritual Independence in the person of Knox; at the time of the rise of Episcopacy Henderson represented the cause for which Knox so nobly fought; and now, under the leadership of Chalmers, once more the Church was entering upon the old conflict.

There was nothing at first to suggest the approach of conflict. The Evangelical party were in the ascendant in the Assembly, and were carrying everything before them. The Church had thrown off its lethargy, and, like a

giant awakened from his slumbers, was rejoicing in its newly-found strength. Under the inspiration of Chalmers, a much-needed church extension scheme was prosecuted with vigour. In four years, from 1834 to 1838, there were erected 187 new places of worship, at a cost of £200,000, and in the same period the contributions to Foreign Missions were trebled. Colonial schemes were set afloat, and a Jewish Mission was established. In all directions a marked spirit of earnestness was abroad, and it seemed as if a long and prosperous future was in store for the Church. The mind of Chalmers was full of large schemes. His great ideal was a Church national in the truest sense of the term—aiding the cause of progress in all directions, religious, intellectual, and social—a Church which would touch national interests at all points, a great and glorious instrument for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Suddenly a cloud no bigger than a man's hand appeared on the horizon. On October 14, 1834, a probationer, Mr Robert Young, was presented to the parish of Auchterarder by the patron, Lord Kinnoul. The call was signed

by the factor (a non-resident) and two heads of families. It was opposed by two hundred and twenty-seven heads of families, all communicants. Acting on the Veto Law, the Presbytery, of course, refused to sanction the call, their action on appeal being approved by the Synod and General Assembly. The case was taken to the Court of Session, which by a majority of eight to five declared that it was the duty of the Church to carry out the law of Patronage, and admit Mr Young to the charge.

This, of course, was virtually declaring that the Church, in passing the Veto Law, was arrogating to itself powers that belonged to the State, and that the Veto Law was invalid, inasmuch as the Church, as subordinate to the State, had no legislative power even in its own spiritual sphere. The decision of the Court of Session was upheld by the House of Lords. The upshot was a denial of the Church of its claim for Spiritual Independence. Other cases soon sprang up under which the relations between Church and State were subject to fierce conflict in the Law Courts. At Lethendy, in the Presbytery of Dunkeld, the congregation

opposed the nominee of the patron. After the usual appeal, the General Assembly confirmed the action of the congregation. Another minister was nominated, but when the Presbytery came forward to carry out the settlement, the previous nominee produced an interdict granted by the Court of Session prohibiting the Presbytery from proceeding with the presentation. In the face of the interdict, and acting upon instructions from the Commission, the Presbytery proceeded with the settlement. For this the clerical members of the Presbytery were summoned to the High Court. At the bar the eight ministers of Presbytery were solemnly rebuked, and informed that repetition of the offence would entail imprisonment.

Another case which caused great stir at the time was known as the Marnoch outrage. At Marnoch, in the parish of Strathbogie, a former assistant, Mr Edwards, was presented with the living by the trustees of the Earl of Fife. The call was signed by the village innkeeper and three non-resident heritors, the opposition numbering two hundred and sixty-one. The patrons presented another

minister, whereon the rejected nominee obtained interdict from the Court of Session to prevent the Presbytery proceeding with the ordination. In this case the majority of the Presbytery, evidently of the Moderate persuasion, were prepared to bow to the Court of Session. They came to the decision that it was the duty of the Presbytery to submit to the law, on the ground "that the Court of Session had authority in matters relating to the induction of ministers." The case went up to the General Assembly of 1839, when instructions were sent to the Presbytery to suspend further action till the May following. In December the case came before the Commission, when Dr Candlish carried a series of resolutions suspending the seven members of the Strathbogie Presbytery who had preferred to take their instructions from the Court of Session rather than from the General Assembly. The seven ministers applied to the Court of Session to have the Commissioners' sentence suspended, and to have Establishment clergy interdicted from preaching in their parishes. This was too sweeping a demand, but a second application on the same lines was granted

interdicting all ministers of the Established Church from entering the parishes of the seven without their consent.

Immediately the heather was on fire. Evangelical leaders like Chalmers, Guthrie, and Candlish hastened to Strathbogie in defiance of the interdicts. Open-air services were held, attended by great masses of people amid scenes of excitement. The seven suspended ministers, nothing daunted, proceeded to call the rejected nominee, Mr Edwards, and fortified themselves with a Court of Session decree ordaining the Presbytery to receive and admit Mr Edwards as parish minister of Marnoch. On the day of the ordination the church doors were opened, and the church was instantly packed. After the proceedings had been opened with prayer, two protests were read by the agent for the parishioners, the one signed by all the elders, the other by 450 communicants.

Describing the scene that followed, Dr Hanna, in his *Life of Chalmers*, so pointedly summarised by Dr M'Crie in his admirable book, *The Church of Scotland: Her Division and Re-Union*, says: "The people of Marnoch

immediately arose from their seats in the body of the church: old men with heads white as the snow that lay deep on their native hills, the middle-aged, and the young who were but rising into life. Gathering up their Bibles and psalm-books, which in country churches often remain there for half a century, they left the church once free to them and theirs but now given up to the spoiler. They went out, many in tears, and all in grief. No word of disrespect or reproach escaped their lips. Even those who sat in the pew—the only pew representing Intrusionism, were moved—were awed. 'Will they all leave?' some of them were heard whispering. Yes, they all left, never to return. The place left vacant by them in the church was immediately filled by a rush of strangers from without, and a disgraceful scene of riotous disorder ensued, which it required the presence of a magistrate to check. When peace had been restored the act of ordination was completed." Thus forcibly does the classic biographer sum up and conclude his narrative of that day's doings: "It was an ordination altogether unparalleled in the history of the Church, performed by a

Presbytery of suspended clergymen, on a call by a single communicant, against the desire of the patron, in face of the strenuous opposition of a united Christian congregation, in opposition to the express injunction of the General Assembly, at the sole bidding, and under the sole authority of the Court of Session." The conflict which so dramatically culminated at Marnoch brought into clear relief the claim of the State to dominate the Church. It was plain that if further progress was to be made the scene of conflict would need to be removed from the congregational to the ecclesiastico-political arena.

THE DISRUPTION

CHAPTER XI

THE DISRUPTION

The Law Courts had given their decision on the cases which grew out of the Church's attempt to give effect to the Veto Act. Their decision, though dealing with the question of Patronage, really raised the much deeper question of Spiritual Independence. The controversy now passed out of the Law Courts into the General Assembly. In May 1838, the General Assembly met to consider the position which had been created by the legal decision. Dr Buchanan, who afterwards wrote the history of the Ten Years' Conflict, in a speech of great power put the controversy in its proper light. He called special attention to the vital and fundamental issues which had been raised. He drew attention to the fact that the object of the Veto Act was simply to retain for

congregations a right which all through her history the Church had claimed. His remarks on Spiritual Independence are so applicable at the present time that no apology need be offered for making the following extract from his references to the competency of the Church to regulate its own affairs, and in particular to pass the Veto Law: "But what the Assembly is concerned with at present is not the wisdom of the Church, but the competency of the Church in making such a law at all. I am well persuaded that even among those who objected to the passing of the law on grounds of expediency, there are many as much prepared as I am to contend for the Church's full right and authority to make it, and who will be as ready to join in disclaiming that jurisdiction which the civil court has assumed in venturing to pronounce it illegal. That the settlement of a minister is a matter purely ecclesiastical is too obvious to need illustration. In all such matters, the policy of the Church, as her own standards require, must lean upon the Word immediately as the only ground thereof, must be taken from the pure fountains of the Scriptures, the Church hearing the voice of

Christ the only spiritual King, and being ruled by His laws. And never can she consent to renounce the fundamental article of her constitution, whatever be the cost at which she may be called to maintain it." Dr Buchanan concluded by moving that the Church should resolve to maintain at all hazards, as the Presbyterians of Scotland had ever done even to the death, her testimony for Christ's Kingdom and Crown. The motion was carried.

At the next Assembly, in May 1839, the subject came up again for discussion, particularly with reference to the decision of the Lords upholding the Court of Session judgment. This Assembly is of special interest to us in the present day, from the fact that Dr Chalmers took part in the debate, and enunciated in clear terms his views of the relations of Church and State about which there has been so much dispute. In moving for the appointment of a committee to deal with the matter, Chalmers said that the Church had existed for many ages with all its tenets and usages, as founded on the word of God or on its views of Christian expediency as to what was best for the good of imperishable souls. Continuing in the same

strain, he said: "None of these were given up to the State at the time when the Church entered into alliance with it; but one and all of them remained as intact and inviolable after the alliance as before it. I hold it to be quite an axiom, a first and elementary truth, that we are never in any instance to depart from the obligations which lie upon us as a Christian Church, for the sake of either obtaining or perpetuating the privileges which belong to us as an Established Church."

Here, then, we find Chalmers several years before the Disruption declaring in unmistakable language that the fundamental principle of the Church of Scotland was Spiritual Independence, and that in comparison with that the privileges of State connection were only of secondary importance, to be discarded when they came into collision with the fundamental principle. This is no mere isolated expression of Chalmers. At a meeting of the Commission in August 1840, Chalmers, in defining his views regarding the powers of the Church in dealing with the minutes of the Strathbogie Presbytery, said: "The Church of Scotland can never give way, and will sooner give

up her existence as a National Establishment."

What was that but saying that the Spiritual Independence of the Church was of such supreme importance that, rather than submit to encroachment upon it, he was prepared to surrender the privilege of an Establishment. The one, in the view of Chalmers, was a fundamental principle; the other a privilege, valuable in his eyes, but which must be sacrificed when necessary to retain the spiritual freedom of the Church. In a word, Spiritual Independence was essential to the very existence of the Church; Establishments were expedients for the maintenance and spread of the Church's influence — expedients to be relinquished when they proved to be hindrances rather than helps.

It is a common opinion that the Disruption leaders were wedded to the principle of an Establishment, and that they drifted gradually in the direction of Voluntaryism. Candlish was no Voluntary, and yet we find him in the debates of 1841 drawing a clear distinction between the Spiritual Independence of the Church and her establishment by the State.

Candlish, at a great public meeting in Edinburgh in August 1841, said that if the worst came to the worst, if the alternative were an Erastian Establishment or none, he would relinquish Establishment and face Disruption. "I am," he said, "not a worshipper of the principle of Establishment."

Those who contend that Chalmers thought so highly of the Establishment principle that he made it a fundamental principle of the Disruption Church, will have some difficulty in explaining the following extract from his famous lectures in London in 1838, five years before the Disruption: "There is nothing which the State can do to our independent and indestructible Church, but strip her of her temporalities; she would remain a Church notwithstanding, as strong as ever in the props of her own moral and inherent greatness. And though shrivelled in all her dimensions by the moral injury inflicted on many thousands of families, she would be at least as strong as ever in the reverence of her country's population. She was as much a Church in her days of suffering as in her day of outward security

and triumph—when a wandering outcast with nothing but the mountain breezes to play around her, and nought but the caves of the earth to shelter her—as now, when admitted to the bowers of an Establishment. The magistrate might withdraw his protection, and she cease to be an Establishment any longer, but in all the high matters of sacred and spiritual jurisdiction she would be the same as before—with or without an Establishment, she, in these, is the unfettered mistress of her doings."

Naturally, the Evangelicals were reluctant to sever their connection with the State without making strenuous efforts to avert the threatened disruption. Delegates were sent to London to negotiate with the Whig Government of Lord Melbourne. A Bill was brought in by Lord Aberdeen, and afterwards withdrawn. The Duke of Argyll favoured a measure which had the promise of a settlement, but it came to grief owing to a change of Government. An attempt to get a committee appointed to look into the whole subject was not successful, thanks to the opposition of Sir Robert Peel and his Govern-

ment. The situation had now become acute. Chalmers, who clung to the hope that a catastrophe might be averted, began now to contemplate disruption. He was brought face to face with what has been called the Establishment principle and its relation to Spiritual Independence. A letter from Sir George Sinclair gave him an opportunity of stating definitely his views on this point, and in face of the stress which the Lord Chancellor placed upon the opinions of Chalmers, his reply to Sir George Sinclair is of great importance. He says: "In my London lectures, in my Church Extension Addresses, in all my controversies with the Voluntaries, in my numerous writings for twenty years back, the Spiritual Independence of the Church has ever been brought prominently forward as an indispensable part of my theory, and I have uniformly stated that the least violation of that independence in return for a State endowment was enough to convert a Church Establishment into a moral nuisance." He goes on to indicate that his advocacy of a National Church was due solely to the religious and moral benefits which should

accrue from it, but that separation was necessary when the Church was no longer an engine of Christian usefulness. Those who contend that Chalmers looked upon the Establishment principle as the fundamental basis of the Church, are driven to credit him with the absurd view that the Church could have as its fundamental basis a principle which at the time of the Disruption had become a moral nuisance. The speeches made in the House of Commons by Sir Robert Peel and others made it plain that the English mind could not get beyond an Erastian theory of Church and State. It was evident that no help was to be obtained from the Legislature. The time had come for the Evangelicals to make up their mind as to their future course. On the 19th of May 1842, there met what proved to be the last General Assembly of the United Church of Scotland.

Upon Chalmers the result of the controversy between Church and State was the shattering of his ideal. Since the time he had abandoned Moderatism and thrown his heart and soul into Evangelicalism, Chalmers was filled with the conception of the Establishment as a great

agent of Christian usefulness. In his famous London lectures some years before the Disruption, he had dwelt with enthusiasm upon the fact that into the Church of Scotland, as into the poor man's home, the King cannot—the King dare not enter. Inspired by the idea of the entire independence of the Church in the domain of the spiritual, Chalmers had thrown his soul into a great Church extension scheme, and at the outset he was met by opposition of the State.

The Assembly which passed the Veto Law also passed the Chapel Act. Both were passed on the assumption that in matters relating to the calling of ministers and relating to the status of ministers of Chapels of Ease the Church was its own master. We have seen what happened in the case of the Veto Law. The Chapel Act fared no better. Five years after it was passed it was declared illegal by the law courts to carry out the intention of the Church, as the allocating of territorial districts could not be done irrespective of the will of the heritors. In giving judgment, the Lord Justice-Clerk expressly declared that "the Establishment being instituted by the

State, the competency of all its Acts must be subject to the determination of the supreme court of law." In the law courts in the two great matters upon which the Evangelicals prided themselves—the election of ministers and church extension—the Church had been worsted. What was to be done? Clearly the time had come for a final step on the part of the Evangelicals, and at the General Assembly of 1842 the consideration of the step was the one theme of deliberation. At the Assembly two matters of supreme importance were disposed of.

A resolution was passed for the abolition of Patronage. Dr M'Crie was right. Better every way it would have been for the Church had the heroic course been taken in 1834, and the abolition of Patronage been demanded instead of the adoption of the Veto. M'Crie's words came true: "They say they have muzzled the monster; it is a mistake; they have only muffled him, and they have muzzled the people." Dearly was the Church to pay for preferring the timid to the heroic course in 1834. The other matter disposed of at the Assembly of 1842 was the adoption of the

famous Claim of Right for presentation to Parliament. Previous to the meeting of the Assembly, considerable uncertainty existed as to the best method of presenting their case to Parliament. There were those who evidently thought that Parliament should be asked to pronounce upon the question of the Spiritual Independence of the Church.

Dr Chalmers's advice at that juncture is so pertinent to the situation of to-day that no apology need be offered for reproducing his words. Referring to the proposal to draw up a Claim of Right, Chalmers said: "I hold it a great advantage that, in preparation of such a document, we can set ourselves forth in the light of a suffering and aggrieved party—not as claimants, but as complainers; that is, not as seeking for ourselves any new powers, but as protesting against an invasion made upon our old liberties, and which have been ours in undisturbed possession for many generations. One great benefit of such an attitude is, that whereas to meet the allegation of seeking power for ourselves, we felt compelled to say, in reply and vindication, that it was but the power of giving effect to the dissents of the

people—we do not need thus to mix up one question with another, but may confine ourselves simply to a demand for justice against the aggressions of Civil Courts on the part which belongs to the Church, and to the Church exclusively, in the collation of the ministerial office."

Those who hanker after legislative sanction in the matter of Spiritual Independence, would do well to ponder the line taken up by Chalmers when dealing with the right of the people to elect their own ministers. He said: "I would never ask from the Legislature a recognition of the principle of Non-Intrusion. It is a far greater thing which is at stake—the right of giving effect to this and every other principle of a purely spiritual nature, which seemeth to us a sound one. We do not ask the bestowal of even this right at their hands. We only ask their recognition of it as a right, which both originally and constitutionally belongs to us; or, rather, we stand before them as an aggrieved party (which, as I have already said, were an immense advantage), and ask their protection from an invasion on that sacred prerogative which, both in the nature of

things and by law, belongs to us. This is our high ground, and we should keep by it." This wise policy of Chalmers was adopted, with the result that at the Disruption the Free Church was able to inscribe on its banner the historic words, Spiritual Independence. The Claim of Right, as its name indicates, was not a petition to Parliament for certain privileges; the Church did not seek Spiritual Independence. It acted on the assumption that it already possessed such independence, and claimed from Parliament that its rights should be respected. Those rights had not been respected by the Law Courts, and Parliament was asked to intervene with a remedy for what was felt to be an intolerable injustice. It was claimed as a right that the Church should not be interfered with in the exercise of her spiritual duties by the Courts of Law, on the ground that in things spiritual Christ was Head of the Church. The Lord High Commissioner was requested to transmit the document to Her Majesty as the Head of the State. On January 4, 1843, an answer was received in the form of a letter from the Home Secretary, in which the Claim of Right was described as

unreasonable, and one which the Government must advise Her Majesty to decline to grant. One final attempt was made to get redress. On 7th March Mr Fox Maule, afterwards Earl of Dalhousie, moved for inquiry. The motion was opposed by the Government, and was rejected by a majority of one hundred and thirty-five. The Scottish members, in the proportion of more than two to one, voted in the minority. The votes of England decided a matter purely Scottish. Erastianism then, as now, had the ultimate decision in a question which it did not understand.

On Thursday, May 18, 1843, the General Assembly met, with Dr Welsh, the Moderator, in the chair. In his *Life of Dr Chalmers*, Dr Hanna has graphically described the proceedings. His Grace the Lord High Commissioner was announced, and the whole assemblage rose and received him standing. Solemn prayer was then offered up. The members having resumed their seats, Dr Welsh rose. By the eager pressure forward—the hush! hush! that burst from so many lips—the anxiety to hear threatened to defeat itself. The disturbance lasted but a moment. "Fathers and brethren,"

said Dr Welsh, and now every syllable fell upon the ear amid the breathless stillness which prevailed, "according to the usual form of procedure, this is the time for making up the roll. But, in consequence of certain proceedings affecting our rights and privileges, proceedings which have been sanctioned by Her Majesty's Government, and by the Legislature of the country, and more especially in respect that there has been an infringement on the liberties of our Constitution, so that we could not now constitute this Court without a violation of the terms of the union between Church and State in this land, as now authoritatively declared, I must protest against our proceeding further. The reasons that have led me to come to this conclusion are fully set forth in the document which I hold in my hand, and which, with permission of the House, I will now proceed to read."

In this document, after the wrongs of the Church had been succinctly recited, the parties who signed it proceed at its close to say that "we are not responsible for any consequences that may follow from this our enforced separation from an Establishment which we loved

and prized, through interference with conscience, the dishonour done to Christ's crown, and the rejection of His sole and supreme authority as King of His Church."

Having finished reading this Protest, Dr Welsh laid it upon the table, turned, bowed respectfully to the Commissioner, left the chair, and proceeded along the aisle to the door of the church. Dr Chalmers had been standing immediately on his left. He looked vacant and abstracted while the Protest was being read; but Dr Welsh's movement awakened him from his reverie. Seizing eagerly upon his hat, he hurried after him with all the air of one impatient to be gone. The effect upon the audience was overwhelming. At first a cheer burst from the galleries, but it was almost instantaneously restrained. It was felt by all to be an expression of feeling unsuited to the occasion; it was checked in many cases by an emotion too deep for any other utterance than the fall of sad and silent tears. The whole audience was now standing gazing in stillness upon the scene. Man after man, row after row, moved along the aisle, till the benches on the left, lately so crowded,

showed scarce an occupant. More than 400 ministers, and still a larger number of elders, had withdrawn. A vast multitude of people stood congregated in George Street, crowding in upon the church doors. When the deed was done within, the intimation of it passed like lightning through the mass without, and when the forms of their most venerated clergymen were seen emerging from the church, a loud and irrepressible cheer burst forth from their lips, and echoed through the now half-empty Assembly Hall.

In the city Lord Jeffrey was sitting reading in his quiet room, when one burst in upon him saying, "Well, what do you think of it? More than 400 of them are actually out." The book was flung aside, and springing to his feet, Lord Jeffrey exclaimed, "I'm proud of my country; there is not another country upon earth where such a deed could have been done."

THE RELATIONS OF CHURCH AND STATE

CHAPTER XII

THE RELATIONS OF CHURCH AND STATE

To the superficial reader of Scottish ecclesiastical history, the ten years' conflict, which ended in the Disruption, may seem a mere squabble over the election of ministers—a second-rate dispute over a second-rate question. On the contrary, the controversy which waged round the Veto Law involved issues of momentous import. If the State was to be allowed to dictate to the Church in the election of ministers, clearly there was an end of the great heritage of Spiritual Independence, for which the Church had done battle for three centuries. Rather than submit to the interference of the State in matters spiritual, rather than sacrifice the principle of Spiritual Independence, the Evangelical party left behind the flesh-pots of the Establishment

and marched into the wilderness. Up till recently it was the accepted opinion in Scotland that the Free Church came into existence in order to vindicate Spiritual Independence, which was held to be the fundamental principle of its constitution. Scottish opinion on this subject received a rude shock by the decision of the House of Lords on 1st August 1904, on the great question of the legality of the Union of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church. According to the Lords the Union was invalid, because in uniting with the United Presbyterians, who were Voluntaries, the Free Church departed from a fundamental principle of its constitution as drawn up at the Disruption, namely, the Establishment principle.

Naturally, such a decision sends us back to the study of the Claim of Right, in which the Disruption leaders gave their reasons for leaving the Establishment, and formulated the principles of the new Church. What, then, has the Claim of Right to say to the decision of the House of Lords? The Claim of Right declares the fundamental principle to be the Headship of Christ. That "essential doctrine

and fundamental principle," it is pointed out, had been recognised, ratified, and confirmed (not conferred, observe) by repeated Acts of Parliament, but the independence of the Church in matters spiritual had been encroached upon by Acts of Parliament and by the Courts of Law in a manner that amounted to a denial of the Headship of Christ.

In order to maintain intact the principle of Spiritual Independence, which through the centuries had been the distinctive note of the Church of Scotland, and for which many of her sons had shed their blood, the men of the Disruption left the Establishment in 1843. What of the Establishment principle, which the House of Lords declared to be the fundamental principle of the Disruption Church? In the Claim of Right it does not hold a leading place—it is mentioned, so to speak, parenthetically. It is introduced not in connection with the duty of the Church, but in connection with the duty of the Civil Magistrate. Who ever heard of a Church making as its fundamental principle not its own relation and duty to its Divine head, but

the politico-ecclesiastical relation of a State official? Did the Evangelicals come out at the Disruption in order to proclaim to the world the duties of the Civil Magistrate? Was it for that ministers left their manses and congregations their churches? Was it for that Dr Chalmers organised a fund in order to start the new Church on an adequate financial basis?

The fundamental fallacy of the House of Lords' judgment was that of treating the Free Church at the Disruption as a kind of syndicate, with the historic speech of Dr Chalmers, the Moderator, as prospectus, on the strength of which funds were collected. The practical answer is that Chalmers and his friends came out at the Disruption in order to secure freedom to preach the Gospel, unhampered by State restrictions and conditions. To realise their ideal the people subscribed funds, and not till the funds were raised did Dr Chalmers issue what is called his prospectus. What kind of a syndicate is that in which the funds are collected first and the prospectus issued afterwards? The truth is, the Moderator of General Assembly as such has no representative

character. He speaks in his address only for himself. With the sentiments of his opening address his hearers may agree or disagree, as they see fit.

Now as a matter of fact, many in the Assembly did not agree with Dr Chalmers in his defence of the Established principle. The deliverance of Chalmers — "We are not Voluntaries"—upon which the Law Lords founded their judgment, created dissatisfaction. Two days later Chalmers, on learning of the dissatisfaction, expressed himself thus: "Before I conclude, I have one thing to state, to which I would request the attention of any of our Voluntary friends who are here present. I don't know anything that has more annoyed me than the report of the speech I gave from the chair, in which I am represented as saying that I can hold no communion with those who hold the Voluntary principle. Now, I said no such thing. I don't ask them to renounce their principle, and all I ask at their hands is, that they will not ask me to renounce my principle. It was a point of difference between us; but I expressly said that it was a point upon which we could agree

to differ. We can hold communion with those who think that there should be no connection between Church and State—though we can hold no communion with those who think that there should be such connection, even though the State should lend its influence to the theology of the Church so as to make it different from the pure theology that comes directly to us from the fountain-head of truth. I hope that this explanation will suffice for the removal of any misunderstanding that may have been excited from the perusal of this very grievous mis-report, which, I must say, has annoyed me exceedingly. I say that we may be engaged in a common cause, and that there may be a common coadjutorship. . . . Agreeably to the excellent distinction that there is a difference between co-operation and incorporation, we are, perhaps, not yet come to the length of incorporation."

The irony of the Lord Chancellor's judgment is increased by the fact that the explanatory speech of Chalmers was looked upon by leading Scotsmen at the time as practically a retraction of the reference to Voluntaryism in his Moderator's address. Thus we find Lord

Cockburn, in his *Memorials*, writing as follows of the Disruptionists: "Their sentiments towards Dissenters were narrowly watched—Chalmers made one rash speech on the subject, but explained himself right the next day—and all appearances are favourable to the hope that, if the two sects which have been driven at the distance of a century from their parent establishment do not speedily unite, they will at least co-operate. The only obstacle is that most of the old Dissenters are now Voluntaries, whereas all the members of the Free Church have hitherto thought not merely that an Establishment was expedient, but that its erection was the duty of the Civil Magistrate. This principle, however, will abate under disestablishment; and though Voluntaryism prevails among other Dissenters individually, it is not one of their standards as a religious community."

Writing of the Bi-centenary of the Westminster Assembly, at which Chalmers went still further in the direction of Voluntaryism, Cockburn said: "One of the remarkable facts about the Bi-centenary was the coalition between the members of the Free Church and

other Dissenters. No Established Churchmen were there, probably not one, but every species of Dissenters was present, and in harmony. Of the five Moderators who presided at their different sederunts, four represented the four principal sects of Scottish Seceders, and Chalmers was the fifth. With his usual singleness of idea, the recently liberated doctor who a few months ago was a flaming sword in defence of the Establishment, made an admirable speech in favour of something not very unlike Voluntaryism."

That Chalmers, while placing high value on State connection, viewed the subject not as a vital part of religion but a matter of policy, is plain from his remarks at the General Assembly held in Glasgow in October 1843: "I believe we are thoroughly at one upon every material question of Christian doctrine; but we are not at one upon a question (Voluntaryism) that has very much been agitated of late, and which is not a question of Christian doctrine, but a question of Christian economics." Dr Candlish, speaking immediately after Dr Chalmers, said: "My friends will bear me witness that I am the

very last person who would stand on the rigid assertion of the mere theory of establishments for the purpose of keeping up division or schism in the Church. So far from that, it appears to me that the distinct refusal of the states and kingdoms of this world to recognise the only principle on which we can consent to have the Church established—their refusal to establish the Church of Christ while they recognise her spirituality and freedom—leaves to us a very great degree of practical liberty and a large measure of practical discretion as to the terms on which we should stand with other Churches. Is the division and schism of the Christian Church to be kept up by a question as to the duty of another party (the State) over whom we have no control?" In the same strain we have the opinion of Dr Cunningham that the question of establishment was purely theoretical.

In giving his judgment in the Court of Session, Lord Low went to the root of the matter, as follows: "The history of the Free Church since the Disruption, shows that the particular form of the duty of the State to the Church, for which the pursuers contend, was not

regarded as an essential matter. If the Establishment principle was an essential and fundamental doctrine of the Church, then it must be conceded that until that principle received practical effect, the Church was an imperfect and incomplete Church. As, therefore, the Free Church was from the beginning a Church of great zeal, and possessed of considerable power and influence, one would have expected to find it straining every nerve to bring about such an alteration in the law that it might—without sacrifice of principle—resume its connection with the State. But not a single act of that nature is averred, nor in any such act disclosed, by the voluminous documents produced. On the contrary, the documents seem to me to show that the tendency of the Church was towards a permanent and avowed separation from the State; and further, I imagine it to be a matter of common knowledge, that if the views and efforts of the majority of the Free Church had been successful, an Established Church would have ceased to exist in Scotland long prior to the Union."

Not only were the Free Church and the

United Presbyterian Churches gradually drawing closer and closer in the direction of Union, not only was Union their inevitable goal, but their starting-point was the same. The Secessionists no more that the Disruptionists, were Voluntaries at the start. The Erskines and their immediate followers were as firm believers as Chalmers in the Establishment theory, but with both the early Secessionists and Disruptionists it was an ecclesiastico-political theory held in subordination to their ideal of a Church spiritually independent. So long as the Church of Scotland was spiritually free the Erskines had no quarrel—quite the reverse—with Establishments.

The remarkable resemblance at their origin between the Secession and the Disruption Churches is seen by a comparison of the Claim of Right with the Defence published by the Secessionists when they left the Church of Scotland. The general argument of the Defence is that the Secession was justified by the public and flagrant failure of the Established Church to maintain the historical principles of the Church of Scotland. It disavows the view that the civil magistrate

has no right to meddle with religion, and acknowledges that the legal establishment of religion is good in itself, and may be serviceable to the Church. But, it says, legal Establishment has become a snare and has subjected the Church to irreligious influences, so that outward communion with her has become a hindrance to the discharge of duty. The civil bond, created and maintained by Parliaments, is not the true bond of the Church. Her unity is spiritual. It is one thing to depart from a particular province or national Church, on account of corruptions, and another thing to separate from the Catholic visible Church. Loyalty to the Headship of Christ and care for the edification of His body, zeal for the purity of His institutions, and for the liberty He has given His people (continues the Defence), must be the chief concern of office-bearers; and to maintain a profane syncretism or coalition with the enemies of these, for the value of the civil bond, is unjustifiable. This testimony, be it observed, is all the stronger because the Seceders when they broke away from the Establishment were not Voluntaries. Had they been Voluntaries

it might have been argued that they left the Church because they refused to accept the Establishment principle. They had no quarrel with the Establishment principle as such; their grievance was that the Establishment principle was treated as fundamental. In their view, it was at best a secondary principle, a means to an end, a means of securing to the Church Spiritual Independence. The Seceders held that the supreme concern was the Headship of Christ, and the State's interference in matters spiritual was at once resented when it encroached upon the Divine Headship. When the State arrogated to itself Erastian powers, Erskine and his followers, followed later by Chalmers and the Evangelicals, separated from the State and entered upon a road whose logical end was Voluntaryism.

It was not possible for two great Separatist movements like the Secession and the Disruption to take place in ecclesiastical Scotland without bringing the public mind to consider from a new point of view the historic relations of Church and State. We have seen that at the outset both the Secession and the Disrup-

tion leaders had no quarrel with religious establishments as such. In fact, the duty of the Civil Magistrate in regard to giving protection to national religion was never called in question. For the reason, we have to go back to the Reformation. At the time of Knox the Protestant Church had a political, or rather national, significance as well as a religious significance. In those days the question of the separation of Church and State did not arise. In consequence of the all-embracing action of the Church of Rome, religion, no longer identified mainly with the relation of man to God, had become a huge system of temporal government, in which man's social and political duties were carefully defined. From the nature of the case, Protestantism had to confront its great rival with an equally comprehensive life system, and in order to do that it was necessary to utilise all the powers of the State.

It was, therefore, quite natural that Knox should seek to fortify the Reformed Church with all the powers of the State. To separate the two powers was to invite defeat. The political power of Rome could only be broken

by Protestantism allying itself with political forces. How impossible was the separation of Church and State is seen in the fact that those who were interested in bringing in the Reformation were also interested in endeavouring in the political sphere to put an end to the despotism of the Papacy. If that despotism was to be overthrown, if individual and national liberty was to be secured, the work could only be accomplished by the Protestant leaders combining, in the interests of national religion and social well-being, the functions of Churchmen and Statesmen. Out of the special circumstances of the time there emerged a new theory of Church and State, in which an attempt was made to do justice to both powers, whose efficiency had been demonstrated in dramatic fashion at the Reformation.

Romanism, by making the Church absolute and using the State solely for its own ends, had wrought ruin. On the other hand, the Reformers were not enamoured of Erastianism, with its subjection of the Church to Kingly power and influence. The solution was sought in a theory which recognised the supremacy of the two powers in their respective spheres—

the Church supreme in matters spiritual, and the State supreme in matters temporal. Such a theory, however fascinating at the outset, and however satisfying under certain ideal conditions, contained elements of friction which, under the sway of imperfect humanity, were bound to manifest themselves sooner or later. What has the history of Scotland been on the ecclesiastical side but a series of conflicts between the two powers—the Church and the State?

Take the difficulties which grew up around the functions of the Civil Magistrate. In the minds of the Reformers and those who framed the Confession of Faith there was no doubt as to the position which the Civil Magistrate should hold in the State. With them in the battle against Romanism and Erastianism the Civil Magistrate was an important personage; he was a defender of the faith, which in those days meant also a defender of individual and national liberties. Confessions of Faith had a political as well as a religious significance. Those who refused to identify themselves with the Reformed faith could only do so because they were attached either to Romanism or

Erastianism, and that meant disloyalty to the State. A man could not be a Roman Catholic without desiring to bring Scotland back to the Papal rule, and a man could not be an Erastian without wishing to aid the Stuarts in their attempt on the liberties of Scotland.

Hence the signing of the Confession of Faith was no mere formality; it was a declaration of loyalty to the existing Government as well as a declaration of religious belief. Further, not only was the Civil Magistrate the symbol of national unity, but he was also the guardian of national unity. He was to keep his eye on religious bodies, on the quite intelligible ground that heresy in religion meant disloyalty in politics. The Establishment principle, at least if we take it as outlined in the Confession of Faith, was a persecuting principle. We wonder at the harshness of the Confession of Faith because we live in milder times, and cannot transport ourselves into a time when nation-making was a difficult and trying process, and when the religious heretic and the political rebel were practically synonymous. Out of this theory of Church

and State naturally grew the Test Acts, by which means men's religious opinions were held to be a guarantee of their political fidelity.

From the outset there were those in the Church who were jealous of the power of the State, and friction was the result. But so long as the powers of the State through the Civil Magistrate were exerted against Romanist and similar heretics, so long as the State existed for the security of the Reformed Church, the real dangers of despotism at the hands of the State were not manifest. But there came a time when the Civil Magistrate began to turn his attention to the Reformed Church in order to bring it into subjection. Then a conflict was inevitable. The Church asserted its right to legislate unhindered in the spiritual sphere, and the assertion was made so heroically, and on the surface so successfully, that men like Chalmers were really convinced that in the Established Church Spiritual Independence was an assured fact. In his famous lectures, Chalmers, as we have seen, declared that in the case of the Church, as in the case of the poor man's home, the King cannot, the King dare not, enter. Chalmers was led

to this view by a new theory of Establishment, which had grown up in the milder times, which were ushered in at the Revolution Settlement. No longer was it necessary for the Civil Magistrate to give effect to the persecuting principles of the Confession of Faith. Romanism as a disturbing factor in national affairs had passed away with change of dynasty, and this, along with the growth of new schools of heretical opinion, which had no connection with disloyalty (such as the Moderates and the Hume, Hutcheson, and Adam Smith set, whose sympathies were all in the Protestant direction), made the duty of the State to interfere with religious opinion quite superfluous and unnecessary. By the time of Chalmers the duty of the State was supposed to consist in leaving the Church alone, and in simply making, in the words of Chalmers, "a certain legal provision for the ministrations of Christianity."

This beautiful theory was not reconcilable with experience. The Secessionists had discovered by sad experience that the State did a great deal more than "make provision for the ministrations of Christianity." They

found the State encroaching upon what they held to be the fundamental principle of the Church — the Headship of Christ; and in order to realise their great spiritual ideals they were forced to cut all connection with the State. Theoretically they held by the old Reforming and Covenanting ideal of a union of Church and State, with co-ordinate but distinct duties, but in practice they found that they could only give effect to their religious and ecclesiastical views on the basis of Voluntaryism. Chalmers had not got that length. In fact, his London lectures in 1839 were intended as a contribution to the Voluntary Controversy which had sprung up in Scotland on the soil of the Secession movement, and which had for representatives such distinguished men as Dr John Brown, Dr Marshall, and Dr Wardlaw, who replied to Chalmers in a series of lectures in London, of marked ability. These great champions of Voluntaryism undoubtedly leavened the public with the new idea of separation of Church and State.

When the actual collision between Chalmers and the State over the Veto Law took place nobody was more disconcerted than Chalmers

himself, whose beautiful theory of a Church spiritually free, and only accepting legal provision from the State, vanished like snowflakes on an April morn. Still Chalmers was not driven out of his ecclesiastical theory either by the arguments of the Voluntaries or by the events of the Disruption. His famous address as Moderator of the first Free Church General Assembly contained the remark, "We are not Voluntaries," which the Lord Chancellor accepted as the prospectus of the new Ecclesiastical Syndicate. Chalmers, a Tory, was slow in bringing himself to admit that Voluntaryism was really the logical outcome of the principles for which he had contended, and which led to the Disruption. He could not bring himself to believe that it was possible for the people by voluntary effort to make provision for the ministrations of the Church, and in a manner which would take the place of the State endowments.

Experience had a wonderfully educative effect. A few months after the Disruption Chalmers had gone so far away from his old favourite Establishment theory that he spoke of the desirability of co-operation with the

Voluntaries, with a view to ultimate incorporation. Speaking on Voluntaryism in the Glasgow Assembly of 1843, Dr Chalmers said: "I don't think the Voluntary controversy was well understood during the whole time it was carried on, because there was a prodigious mist and obscuration raised up in the midst of that controversy that prevented the combatants from having a clear and distinct view of the opinions and feelings of each other. . . . I look forward now, therefore, with more hope than I did with regret before; and in regard to our friends the Voluntaries we have come to understand each other better. I am glad to understand they are taking a leaf out of our book. They are beginning to institute a general fund. I rejoice to hear it; for the more our points of similarity are multiplied the greater likelihood is there of our being amalgamated before all is done. They have taken that leaf out of our book, and we have many a leaf to take out of theirs. Well, then, what is the amount of the difference betwixt us? It is simply in regard to the duty of a third party, with whom neither the one nor the

other has any connection in matters of this kind."

Even in the Claim of Right, in which the Free Church identified itself as closely as possible with the historic traditions of Scotland, the Civil Magistrate occupied a very subordinate position, and in the speeches of such leaders as Drs Candlish, Cunningham, and Buchanan, the drift was distinctly towards Voluntaryism. How far the Free Church mind had travelled in this direction may be seen from the carefully elaborated statement published by Dr Cunningham when on his visit to the United States as one of a deputation to the American Presbyterian Churches in 1843-44. One of the points raised by the American Presbyterian Churches related to the position of the Free Church to State Establishment. Dr Cunningham drew up a paper, in which was the following: "Even if the State were to make to us proposals which, viewed in themselves, involved nothing that was, in our apprehension, inconsistent with the full recognition of all our rights and liberties of the Church of Christ, we would attach very great weight in deciding upon them, to the

consideration of the way and manner in which our acceptance or refusal would bear on our relation to the other Churches of Christ, as there is good reason to believe that the maintenance of a strict relation between the Churches of Christ in a community would have a far more important bearing upon the interests of religion and the welfare of Christ's people than anything the civil power could do."

Equally significant is the following deliverance of Cunningham: "The question of National Establishments is, with the views and in the circumstances of the Free Church, a purely theoretical one; and of this I feel confident, that before the period come, if ever it come, when the rulers of Great Britain shall make to the Free Church proposals which she could for a moment entertain, the Churches of Christ in that country will have attained to such a unity of sentiment, and such a cordiality of affection for each other, as to secure united and harmonious action in regard to all important matters that may bear upon the welfare of each and all of them." The attitude and utterances of the Free Church

leaders made it plain that the union between the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches was simply a matter of time. In 1863, feelings of sympathy between the two Churches took practical shape in the form of a definite proposal for union.

THE UNITED FREE CHURCH

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNITED FREE CHURCH

TWENTY years' experience had brought the Disruption Church to recognise the immense value of the Voluntary principle. The fear which had led Dr Chalmers to magnify the importance of State endowments for religious ministrations was dispelled by the marvellous success of the Free Church. Having secured its Spiritual Independence, and demonstrated its ability to dispense with State aid, it was natural for the Free Church to draw sympathetically towards the sister Church, which had passed through a like conflict with the State, and had also triumphantly carried to victory the banner of Spiritual Independence. Out of this increasing sympathy between the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches developed the Union movement, which took

shape in 1863. As to the wisdom of union all were agreed; the difficulty was to secure union without sacrifice of distinctive views on either side.

Starting with belief in the Establishment principle, the Secessionists, as we have seen, were gradually driven to the adoption of Voluntaryism pure and simple. The Free Church was repeating the same process, though the attitude of the leaders on the subject of Voluntaryism was not quite so decided as their brethren in the United Presbyterian Church. The first attempt to get out of the difficulty was made by Dr (afterwards Principal) Cairns, who argued that the subject of the abstract duty of the State in the matter of national religion should be left an open question.

At an early stage of the negotiations Dr Charles Brown delivered in the Free Church Assembly a speech which went to the root of the matter, and in clear terms defined the attitude of the advanced section of the Free Church. The speech has such a marked bearing on the present-day problem that no apology need be offered for quoting it at con-

siderable length. Dr Brown said: "Does the difference respecting the lawfulness of the endowment of the Church by the State form a sufficient ground for the Churches remaining in a state of separation? I answer without hesitation, No. For, first, there is nothing about endowments in our Confession of Faith, or in our Formula, even as there is nothing against endowments in the Formula of our brethren. Second, we do not hold State endowments to be anything more than simply lawful, and in certain circumstances not inexpedient. As to the spiritual freedom of the Church, on the other hand, and her independence of the State, we, along with our esteemed brethren, hold that to be a sacred principle never to be abandoned or compromised. Endowments are not a principle (it is perhaps a pity we ever used to speak of the Established principle), they are but one particular application of a principle. But then, thirdly, we have no State endowments. We do not expect any. We don't desire any. I know that men given to deal in theories and bare logic will insist on putting the case that our Claim of Right was by and by to

commend itself to the approval of the British Legislature, and our endowments to be offered back to us on terms of perfect spiritual freedom. And they will insist on our declaring yea or nay, whether in that event we should not be in conscience shut up to accept them and become again the Established Church of the country. I might, perhaps, decline to trouble myself and you with a question referring to a case so purely hypothetical, and in the last degree, as I think they themselves must admit, unlikely to be realised. But I am quite ready to meet it. I do not think our principles shut us up even in the supposed case, to accept these offers. It would remain for the Church in her now greatly altered condition — prosperous and flourishing without the aid of the State, her lot cast in a commercial age, and in a country of great wealth, circumstanced so differently every way from the Scotland of John Knox's day—to consider and determine whether on the whole it were not better and safer for her, and so more in accordance with the will of her Divine Head, to remain on simply friendly terms with so wonderfully pious a Legislature

as our questioners insist on imagining, but prefer withal not to accept the offered gifts."

Of perhaps greater value is the deliverance of Mr Murray Dunlop, the distinguished lawyer, who drew up the Claim of Right. Speaking in the same debate after Dr Brown, he said: "My excellent friend in that wonderful and noble speech—so distinguished by high feeling and noble acuteness—pointed out the erroneous application of terms employed in our old controversy, and explained the false inferences drawn from, and the different meanings involved in, the term Voluntaryism. I wish much he would do the same service in regard to the term 'Establishment principle.' That term in no way described the principles for which the Church contended. It was a result in certain circumstances which they thought lawful, that the State should endow the Church; but as to considering their principles in any degree necessarily connected with the Establishment of the Church, nothing could be further from their view, and nothing could give a more false notion of their principles than by so representing them. So far was this

from being the case, that, for instance, being then equally as now opposed to the Irish Church Establishment, I maintained that it was the duty of the State not only not to endow it, but on the Establishment principle to pull it down—because, viewing the duty of the Civil Magistrate to promote truth, and that Establishment being an obstruction to truth, I held it to be the magistrate's duty to overthrow that Establishment. So far as mere documents are concerned, I sit perfectly loose to them." As if to emphasise the importance of his deliverance, Mr Dunlop went on to say: "I might be supposed to stand more rigidly upon the specific documents setting forth the distinctive principles of our Church than others, seeing I had the honour of preparing the draft of the Church's Claim of Right and the Protest. I feel satisfied, however, that we and our friends are substantially agreed."

These utterances have been given at considerable length because they represent the views of the progressive and influential men in the Free Church, such as Candlish, Buchanan, Guthrie. For years the negotiations dragged on, and with the years came increased obstacles. A

minority, headed by Dr Begg, took up the position that the principle of Establishment was a vital and fundamental part of the constitution of the Free Church, whose union with the United Presbyterian Church would be illegal. The Unionists were in a large majority, but as Dr Begg had a considerable following, and threatened to secede and go into the law courts, it was thought politic to stop the negotiations. In 1873 the movement for union, begun in 1863, was arrested on the same grounds by the representatives of the same party which worked disaster in 1904. One result of the abortive regulations was a clearing up of the real principles which underlay the constitution of both churches. In the Free Church the Establishment principle gradually fell into a subordinate place, as may be seen from the fact that in the Assembly of 1871 on the Union Committee's report, a motion was carried expressing adherence to the following twofold principle as "the great fundamental characteristic of the Church": "The sole and supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His exclusive right to rule in and

over His Church, and the consequent obligation of His Church to be regulated in all her proceedings by His Word alone, for which end she claims in all spiritual matters complete independence and immunity from all coercion and control from without. The prerogative of the same Lord Jesus Christ as Head over all things to His Church, and supreme over nations and their rulers, who are consequently bound collectively and officially as well as individually and personally to own and honour His authority, to further the interests of His holy religion, and to accept the guidance of His Word as making known His mind and will." Here in clear and unmistakable terms the Church of the Disruption takes its stand upon the vital and fundamental principle of Spiritual Independence.

Hitherto we have dealt mainly with the relation of the Free Church to the State. The Disruption, as we have seen, took its rise in the interference of the State with the internal freedom of the Church in regard to the selection of ministers. At that time the question of creed did not arise. The negotiations for union with the United Presbyterian Church did not touch

upon the question of creed. The rock upon which the negotiations split was the Establishment principle. The time was coming when the arena of dispute between the two parties in the Free Church was to be considerably widened so as to include the vital question of the right of the Church to be independent of the State, not merely in matters ecclesiastical, but in matters theological. When the Free Church left behind it the State connection, its leaders thought that it had also left behind the Confession of Faith as a State document. The Established Church, it was known, could not alter its creed without Parliamentary sanction, but no one supposed that the Disruption Church had not the power voluntarily to adapt its creed to its actual beliefs. The time was coming when the dispute, which led to the breakdown of the Union negotiations in 1873, was to reappear in a more comprehensive and far-reaching form.

Much had happened theologically in the Free Church since the Ten Years' Union controversy. A new and more searching controversy had arisen. Hitherto the Free Church had been solely occupied with its relation to

the State. It was now to be occupied with its relation to the Bible. It is not necessary here to detail the controversy which raged over the case of Professor Robertson Smith. Suffice it to say that the outcome was to drive further apart the two sections of the Free Church. The decreasing party led by Dr Begg, in addition to their dissent on the Establishment principle, now found another watchword, namely, orthodoxy. The full effect of this was seen later, when the Free Church in 1892—following the example of the United Presbyterian Church—in order to relieve the mind of its ministers, passed the Declaratory Act. Protests were made by the orthodox party, but not much attention was paid to them, as nobody doubted for a moment that the Church had the right to simplify or modify its creed as circumstances dictated.

The matter was brought to the test in 1900, when the Union took place of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. In view of the difficulties which afterwards cropped up, and the litigation in the Courts which ended in the House of Lords' decision, by which the entire religious organisation of the United

Free Church has been dislocated, it is necessary to note carefully the basis of Union. On this point no better guide can be found than Mr Taylor Innes, whose book, "The Law of Creeds in Scotland," is indispensable to the students of ecclesiastical history. Referring to the Union, Mr Innes says: "There was to be no basis of Union, no Articles of Agreement, no new Constitution for the new Church. The two bodies were simply to unite as they were. The side on which more apprehension was felt was as to the references in the subscription of both Churches to their separate historical origin. Fortunately, however, this also turned out unexpectedly easy, as a result of the forethought or self-restraint in 1846 of the founders of the Free Church. They then took their future ministers bound, not to everything in the Church's recent Claim and Protest, but only to 'the general principles embodied in them,' and to these only as declaring true views not on all subjects, but 'with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the Church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only Head, and to His word as her only standard.' The moment this was

broadly looked at, the difficulty vanished. For if, as the United Presbyterian Committee were satisfied, the future candidates for office of their communion would have no difficulty in accepting this guarded approbation of general principles, as found in the documents of the Free Church, still less would the rising sons of the Free Church hesitate to accept in the same words the very same principles, as found in the Basis of Union of 1847, the fundamental document of the United Presbyterian Church. These two formulæ of subscription were accordingly joined into one by a process of simple carpentry amid universal approval. The others occasioned less difficulty, the aim being always to unite what was admitted as good on either side, and not in the meantime to attempt an ideal *tertium quid.* These proposals and the Uniting Act were sent down through the Churches, according to the arrangements for publicity provided, in the Free Church by the Barrier Act and by the Trust Deed provision for a 'United Body of Christians,' and in the United Presbyterian Church still more fully and effectually."

In the United Presbyterian Church there

was no difficulty with the articles of Union. Considerable interest, however, was manifested in the last meeting of the Free Church Assembly in May 1900, as it was known that the remnant of the old Constitutional party (which under the leadership of Dr Begg brought to nought the negotiations of 1863-73) were determined to carry out their old plan of campaign. After preliminary business was disposed of, Principal Rainy proposed the passing of the overture anent Union with the United Presbyterian Church into a Standing Law. This was met by a counter-motion by the anti-Unionist party, to the effect that no terms of union were acceptable which did not make provision for maintaining in their entirety the constitution of the Free Church and those distinctive views formulated in 1843 as the distinctive testimony of the Church in regard to the duty of the Civil Magistrate in supporting an Establishment of religion. On being put to the vote, the motion of Principal Rainy was carried by a majority of 616, the figures being 643 for union and 27 against.

The Assembly adjourned to meet the day following, along with the Synod of the United

Presbyterian Church, in the Waverley Market, Edinburgh, to consummate the Union. In her day, Scotland, in the sphere of ecclesiastical history, has witnessed many scenes; but none surpassed in dramatic effect and historic importance the scene witnessed in the Waverley Market on Wednesday, October 31, 1900. In his valuable book on the *Divisions and Union of the Church of Scotland*, Dr M'Crie has graphically described the proceedings as follows: "The morning of Wednesday, the 31st, was one of heavy rain, and although the actual fall became slighter during the forenoon, the day throughout was dull and grey. While this atmospheric condition was not favourable to the processional part of the day's programme, it in no way lessened the impressiveness of the spectacle which the citizens of Edinburgh flocked in their thousands to witness. The members of the United Presbyterian Synod having assembled in the Synod Hall, marched in procession from Castle Terrace by Lothian Road and Princes Street. The members of the Free Church Assembly, forming into line in front of the New College quadrangle, marched down the west side of the Mound. The two

processions met near the foot of the Mound, and then became one. The successive couples of each company greeted as they met, then walked four abreast across the open space between the National Gallery and the Royal Institution, along the south side of Princes Street eastward to the Waverley Market. This spacious structure had been converted into an Assembly Hall for the occasion. Made bright with crimson and gold draperies, with a canopy of red, white, and blue calico, and an installation of electric light, the temporary place of meeting was remarkable for the rapidity with which it had sprung into existence, the ease with which it accommodated the vast audiences that assembled in it, and the perfection of its acoustics. An antiquarian and historical element was imparted to the modern fabric by the exhibition of sundry relics, which interested those who could claim to have Covenanting or Cameronian blood in their veins, or who were relatives of those who came out in '43. Here and there upon the walls were swords which had been unsheathed for Christ's Crown and Covenant at Drumclog, Bothwell Bridge, and Airdsmoss, conspicuous

among them being Richard Cameron's Andrea Ferrara and Captain John Paton's light single-edged rapier. Over one door was suspended the original National League and Covenant of 1638 ; over another a Covenanter's flag carried at the battles of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge ; a third displayed a banner of blue silk used at the era of the Revolution, bearing the Edinburgh City arms, and the words, "God bless his Highness the Prince of Orange" ; while over the west gallery there was extended a banner which had done service at Tanfield Hall in 1843 and 1844."

The Supreme Courts of the two Churches were duly constituted and, after a formal motion, the adoption of the Uniting Act was signified by the whole Assembly rising and holding up their right hands. An impressive ceremony ended by the Uniting Act being signed by the two Moderators and the five Clerks of the uniting Churches, whereupon the first General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland was constituted with prayer. Meanwhile the minority had not been idle. They claimed the right, as resting upon the distinctive principles of the Disruption Church, to con-

stitute themselves the General Assembly of the Free Church. They met in the Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh. Among other business they appointed a Law and Advisory Committee to take what legal proceedings in the assertion of their property as might be found necessary. On December 14, 1900, they issued a summons for declarator and interdict in the Court of Session.

THE NEW ERASTIANISM

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW ERASTIANISM

It is not necessary to dwell at length on the action raised in the Court of Session by the protesting minority of the Free Church. Their contention was that the Union was illegal, inasmuch as in uniting with the United Presbyterians, who were Voluntaries, the Free Church had departed from its fundamental principle as formulated at the Disruption, namely, the Establishment principle. In addition, by adopting the Declaratory Act, it was held that the Free Church had departed from the Calvinism of the Confession of Faith. The Court of Session unanimously found for the defenders, whereupon the minority appealed to the House of Lords. The case was duly heard before the Law Lords, but before judgment was given, one of them, Lord Shand, died, and a re-

hearing was necessary. Five of the seven sustained the appeal. The Union was declared to be illegal on the grounds indicated, of departure from the Establishment principle and from the Confession of Faith. The outcome of our study has been surely to discredit historically the judgment of the Law Lords as regards the Establishment principle. On that head no more need be said. The question of creed has only been touched upon incidentally, and it now remains to subject the Lords' judgment on this point to closer examination.

We have shown that the testimony of the Disruption leaders on the Establishment principle quite overthrows the reasonings and decision of the Law Lords. As regards the liberty of the Church to modify its creed, the testimony of the Disruption leaders is equally conclusive. The views of Chalmers on this point are quite explicit. In his life, by Hanna, we have the following: "I look on Catechisms and Confessions as mere landmarks against heresy. It's putting them out of their place to look on them as magazines of truth. There's some of your dour, orthodox folk just over-ready to stretch

the Bible to square with their Catechism; all very well, all very needful as a landmark, but what I say is, do not let the wretched, mutilated thing be thrown between me and the Bible." Speaking of the duty of the Church to the Standards, Dr Candlish, in 1844, said: "It might be the duty of the Churches from age to age to revise their Standards, which were no more than human authorities, to improve them where improvement was required, and to make them, if possible, more agreeable to the Word of God. He was not afraid to see a Church looking into and revising its Standards, but might he not venture to suggest that a Board of Commissioners appointed by deputy from every section of the Presbyterian Church, and it might be from other Churches too, might meet together, and revise their Standards in a spirit of mutual charity, accompanied by a spirit of faithfulness and united prayer to God?" In the same strain and with suggestive emphasis was the following deliverance of Dr Buchanan as Moderator of the General Assembly of 1860: "What a privilege, what a happiness, what a paramount duty it is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith He hath made

His people free! With a great price purchased we this freedom; but the purchase was worth it all. If we fail to carry out the mind of Christ in exercising the government of that branch of His Church which has been committed to our care, the fault must be our own. Upon the table of this House there lies no statute-book but the Bible. Any subordinate acts or formularies that are of authority among us are simply applications of the doctrines and principles of that supreme standard. We receive them, not in deference to any human authority, but as being, in the judgment of our own conscience, bound upon us by the authority of Christ. So long as such is our judgment regarding them, they are retained. So soon as we are convinced that that judgment is erroneous, they are altered or annulled. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the supreme and only law of the Free Church of Scotland."

In the Assembly of 1866, the Moderator, Dr William Wilson, of Dundee, used these memorable words: "No Confession of Faith can ever be regarded by the Church as a final or permanent document. She must always

vindicate her right to revise it, to purge it, to add to it. We claim no infallibility for it or for ourselves who declare our belief in the propositions which it contains. We lie open always to the teaching of the Divine Spirit; nay, we believe in the progressive advancement of the Church into a more perfect knowledge of the truth. . . . It is open to the Church at any time to say: 'We have obtained clearer light on one or other or all of the propositions contained in this Confession: we must revise it: the time has come for us to frame a new point of union with each other, a new testimony to the world.' If this freedom does not belong to us, then indeed we are in bondage to our Confession, and renounce the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." This view was endorsed by Principal Patrick Fairbairn: "I trust we shall not idolise either of these documents (the Confession of Faith and the Catechism), or lift them out of the place that properly belongs to them. They are but human compositions adapted to the Church's state and relations at an advanced period of her history." Principal Fairbairn went on to uphold the duty of revision when necessary.

Even those who opposed the Union in 1873 did not doubt the power of the Church to modify her creed. Thus we find a conservative theologian, and an anti-Unionist, Dr James Gibson, cordially at one with the Moderator and Principal Fairbairn as to the right of revision. "No man," said Dr Gibson, "would lay down the abstract principle that they were in no circumstances to revise what is, after all, a mere human document." These expressions are beyond refutation. The Lord Chancellor's position is really more reactionary than the most conservative of Free Church anti-Unionists—indeed, by comparison, Dr Gibson appears as most enlightened and progressive. None of the old Free Church leaders could have conceived the Church being bound by law to a "mere human document."

It is argued that the disaster which has befallen the United Free Church would have been averted had the Union been legalised by Act of Parliament. Opposition, it is said, would have been powerless had the creed and polity of the United Church been adopted with the concurrence of the State, just as a secular trust gets Parliamentary powers to

make fundamental changes in its constitution. This idea, which has a certain attraction for superficial thinkers, may fitly be termed the new Erastianism. Had the United Free Church taken such a course it would have been false to the history and traditions of the Scottish Church. What was the first act of the Reformation Church? Was it not, when the General Assembly met in 1560, to prepare the Book of Discipline, setting forth the form of Church government? Did the State give its assent to the Assembly's proceedings? No; Parliament refused to ratify the doings of the Assembly. Not only so, but Queen Mary also refused to ratify the proceedings. The Church did not alter its plans in consequence of the attitude of Parliament and the Crown. Taking its stand on Knox's Confession and the Book of Discipline, the Church for seven years did without the status of an Establishment. Scotland had a national religion seven years before it had an Established religion. Take another case. In 1578 the General Assembly approved of what is called the Second Book of Discipline, in which extensive changes were made on the methods of Church

government. Did the Church wait for the concurrence of the State? Not till 1592 did King and Parliament ratify the Second Book of Discipline. In the interval the Church carried out its ecclesiastical reforms as if no Parliament was in existence. Taking its stand on the doctrine of Spiritual Independence, the Church refused to admit that the concurrence of the State was necessary. In regard to its creed the Church never dreamed of depending on the State. Of its own initiative it substituted the Westminster Confession of Faith for the Confession drawn up by Knox. The Church, in the most explicit and dramatic manner, asserted its right not simply to revise its Confession, but to abolish it altogether and put another in its place.

This is no new battle which is being fought in Scotland. It is the old battle under new conditions—the battle for Spiritual Independence. In the sixteenth century Knox and Melville waged fierce warfare with Erastianism. In the seventeenth century Scotland's reply to Erastianism was equally firm and uncompromising. Scotland told the State that the legislation of Charles might be law, but it was

not justice, and until justice was done Scotland's opposition would wax hotter and hotter. What was the result? Under the name of Covenanters the defenders of Spiritual Independence entered upon a battle whose issues became wider and wider, till it involved the whole question of constitutional liberty. In the later days of the seventeenth century the Covenanters were hunted like partridges on the mountains for declaring, with a heroism that makes Scottish hearts thrill, the doctrines of liberty, which became part and parcel of the Constitution at the Revolution of 1688. The blood of the Covenanters proved to be the seed of the State as well as of the Church. Thus it was that a movement for religious liberty, begun in 1638, imparted inspirational force to the great movement for civil liberty which reached dramatic climax in 1688.

Once again we have an Erastian attempt to dictate to Scottish Presbyterians in the matter of Spiritual Independence. Underlying all the contests is the one supreme question—Shall the Church take her marching orders from earthly authorities or from her Divine Head, the Captain of her Salvation? In other words,

shall men in the sphere of religion be free to obey the dictates of conscience enlightened by Scripture, or be compelled to take the deliverance of State authorities as the last word in matters spiritual? We know the answer Scotland in the past gave to these questions. We know the harvest of liberty, political and religious, which grew out of the great Covenanting battlefield, which has been rendered sacred by the blood of our forefathers. Let no one imagine that the only question at issue is ecclesiastical liberty. To-day, as in the Covenanting days, it holds true that a blow struck at religious liberty is also a blow struck at civil liberty. The two things hang together. In the past the Church was ever the guardian of the liberties of Scotland. In recent years the Church has fallen somewhat from her high estate. The chastening hand of affliction, however, is bringing her back to a sense of the high position she holds as the guardian of liberty, justice, and righteousness. In the past the Church in Scotland was in living partnership with the democratic spirit. The partnership for some time past was in danger of dissolution.

Thanks to the new Erastianism, the Church and the people now stand together, animated by one spirit, dominated by one purpose, and inspired by one ideal—the old and ever-cherished ideal of a free Church in a free State.

It is a mistake to suppose that the question at issue in the present controversy is exclusively ecclesiastical. The principle underlying the present controversy—Spiritual Independence—is simply our old friend, the Rights of Man, in a new dress. In the public sphere there is always a contest going on for supremacy among four principles—the Sovereignty of the Church, the Sovereignty of the State, the Sovereignty of the People, and the Sovereignty of Conscience. In all these contests the Churchmen fought for issues which reached far beyond the ecclesiastical sphere. Knox and the Covenanters, in securing spiritual freedom, sowed the seeds of the great harvest of intellectual and political liberty which in these latter days we enjoy. We in Scotland, however, are not free from dangers of our own. Rome has been defeated. Episcopacy has long ceased to be troublesome. Our

danger grows out of the Sovereignty of the Constitution.

Under a wide franchise it has come to be taken for granted that whatever laws are passed by a democratic Parliament, or whatever decisions are given by Courts of Law, in a democratic country are to be accepted as beyond the reach of dispute, even when they override the private or corporate conscience. In other words, it is taken for granted that man has no rights except those conferred upon him by Acts of Parliament, and guaranteed to him by Courts of Law. This view carried out logically means either the excesses of the French Revolution, when men in the assertion of their rights destroy the social foundation of right itself, or a system of State despotism, as in Germany, where the last word is, might not right.

If we are to be saved from social and political anarchy on the one hand, and social and political despotism on the other, we must fight the evils which grow out of the principle of the Sovereignty of Parliaments and Law Courts by another principle—that of the Sovereignty of Conscience. We must fall back

upon the old view, that man as man has certain rights which neither kings, lawyers, nor Parliaments can be allowed to touch. This is the question at issue in the present crisis, and all who value the birthright of humanity—freedom of conscience—should rejoice that once more it is left to Scotland to vindicate the glorious principles for which our fathers went undauntedly to the stake and the scaffold.

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